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ABSTRACT

The appearance of this collection of readings partially fulfills one of Programa de Educacion Interamericana's objectives described in SO 001 424: that of helping our students become better acquainted with the literature of Latin America. This volume was not prepared for just literature or Spanish classes; the introductions and the works cover a wide range of economic, social, and historical aspects which should help enliven the textbook materials, and provoke interest and further research. Poems, short stories, songs, legends, and non-fiction were chosen, but not in equal proportions. Some authors are famous, some nearly unknown; some works are from the earliest times, one was written last year. Those included have been carefully selected for youth with something for almost everyone in the intermediate and secondary grades; many primary school children can also profit from some of the readings when read by the teacher. Availability, permission to publish, ease of translation, and relation to the study of Latin America played a hand in selection. The Library of Congress, Guide to Latin American Literature in Translation, is a source for further acquisitions. A short suggested reading list for students is included in the appendix with others noted in SO 001 425. (Author/VLW)

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# Intercultural Education Series

## Selected Latin American Literature for Youth

MONOGRAPH NO. 3

Programa de Educación Interamericana

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# Selected Latin American Literature for Youth

Earl Jones
*editor*

translators

Walter Owen
Carlos Arecco
Mark Jones
Arminda Ramirez
Johannes Wilbert
Beverly Jones
Frances Dean
Ruth Cedillo
Earl Jones

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*Dean*
College of Liberal Arts
Texas A&M University

and

MR. ALTON BOWEN
*Superintendent*
Bryan (Texas) Independent School District

whose long standing hopes for the future of the Americas
and whose unshakeable belief in the power of education
made

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possible and whose continued advice and counsel are
invaluable to its success.

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# PROGRAMA DE EDUCACION INTERAMERICANA

## INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION SERIES

# SELECTED LATIN AMERICAN LITERATURE FOR YOUTH

Earl Jones
*Editor*

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# Preface

The appearance of this small volume partially fulfills one of *Programa de Educación Interamericana's* objectives: that of helping our students become better acquainted with the literature of Latin America. The word "partially" is used with fear and trembling, for all the books in the world won't help unless the students know about them and are stimulated to read them.

The works included have been carefully chosen for youth; their interest was constantly kept in mind and several were frequently consulted during the selection process. Not all of them will appeal to every student but there should be something for almost everyone in the intermediate and secondary grades. Many primary school children can also profit from some of the items included, particularly when read by the teacher.

This monograph was not prepared for just literature or Spanish classes; the introductions and contents cover a wide range of economic, social, and historical aspects which should help enliven the textbook materials and provoke interest in various aspects of them, thus hopefully leading to further research. Those teachers who want to provide their students with other Latin American writing will find a short suggested reading list in the appendices. Others are noted in *Programa's* Monograph No. 2.

There will no doubt arise a great clamor over those works included or excluded. The editor's knowledge of the literature from some countries caused many more entries from them than from others. Availability also played a great hand in selection, as did ease of obtaining permission to publish, ease of translation, and relation to the study of Latin America in the Texas schools.

Poems, short stories, songs, legends, and non-fiction were chosen, but not in equal proportions. Some authors are famous, some nearly unknown; some works are from earliest times, one was written last year. Regretfully, some countries are not represented and hundreds of the finest living authors do not appear: Borges, Uslar-Pietri, Paz, Gallegos, Jorge Amado, to name but a few. In most cases, however, translations of their works are easily available. The Library of the US Congress' publication *Guide to Latin American Literature in Translation* will be an invaluable source for further acquisitions.

And finally, the several thousand lines printed here seem pitifully few when compared to the agonizing months of work put into them. All but two of the items were translated from the original texts by the staff of *Programa de Educación Interamericana*. They have been carefully checked for accuracy but style, too, was conserved in so far as possible in the change from one language to another. Not all of the selections are complete; those sections were eliminated that did not add significantly to the authors' central ideas.

*Programa de Educación Interamericana* offers this monograph to the teachers and students of Texas in the hope that it will contribute in at least some small way to greater comprehension and collaboration among the American nations.

The Editor

## GABRIELA MISTRAL

### Chile

When Latin America's first Nobel Prize for literature accepted her honor in Sweden in 1945, Lucila Godoy Alcayaga (Gabriela Mistral was her pen name) saw her poetry career starred with world renown. A living symbol of America, her combined Jewish, Indian, and Spanish blood had forged a poetry written with such skill and emotion that it is classed among the masterworks of all time. It shows her aggressive spirit, dedication to teaching, and profound sadness brought on by many tragic events in her life.

Raised in a played-out mining town, she adored a doting father who abandoned the family when she was three. School did not provide the warm companionship she needed and when she was falsely accused of being a thief and subsequently stoned publicly by her classmates, she withdrew to a lonely existence.

In early adolescence Gabriela wrote poetry that was published in local papers. This success, however, terminated her formal education. Upon applying to attend the teacher training school, she was turned down because she wrote verses, not considered "ladylike." She read everything she could find, however, and was allowed to teach in a small country school. Later in life Gabriela took the final examinations for teachers and passed with high honors.

Still a girl, 17, she fell in love with a young man in her town and they continued as sweethearts for nearly two years. Their romance ended with his suicide the day before he was to have married another girl—a double tragedy for Lucila. She never forgot his death and many of her poems express her sorrow, jealousy, and loneliness.

Nevertheless, her love for the classroom inspired her to success and she rose from teacher in her first poor country school to director of a beautiful new academy for girls in the capital of Santiago. She continued writing and her works were published in many newspapers and magazines of Chile.

Her poetry was popular with the people but not with the literary critics who, in the first place, thought only men should write, and second because she wrote in modern style rather than in the old classic. "Desolation," her first published collection, was printed in New York. Spain and Mexico also published her books before Chile did.

After her literary success in other countries, she was appointed as an education specialist with the League of Nations, impressing the world with her wisdom and kindness. After that she served as the Chilean consul in many areas of Europe and the Americas. Still another tragedy was to strike. A nephew, whom she had raised from age 10 to 17, was killed at a fiesta in the Brazilian school he attended. Again her heart was broken.

After 1945, Lucila was in constant demand at literary conferences and while serving as her country's consul in several other nations, inspired the world's youngsters to greater efforts in literature. For some time she lived in Santa Barbara, California, and taught in the teachers' college there.

So much of her adult life had been spent away from Chile that she felt like a stranger in her own land. Even her death was to be on foreign shores, for she died in Long Island, N.Y., at the age of sixty-eight.

Lucila's most-quoted poem is "Intimate," a complicated one in which she interchanges roles with her dead sweetheart. Only parts of other verses are presented here, giving a taste of the versatility of America's best known women in literature.

### Intimate

You! don't press my hands.
There'll come a time
Of resting with much dust and shade
Between the interwoven fingers.

You'll say,
"I can't love her now
For her fingers are like threshed-out grain."

You! don't kiss my mouth.
There'll come the moment full of waning light
When I shall be without lips—
On a moistened ground.

And you'll say,
"I loved her
but I can't love her now.
She does not breathe the cedar fragrance of my kiss."

And I'll be anguishing hearing you.
Speaking wild and blind.
My hand will touch your brow
And my fingers turn to dust,
Then on your grief-worn face my breath will fall.

So, you!
Don't touch me.
It was a lie that I gave you my love
In these outstretched arms, my mouth, my throat.
And you, believing that you drink it all,
Would you yourself deceive
As an unseeing child.

My love is not alone this stubborn, weary body's sheath
Shrinking from the hair shirt's rasp,
Shed in every flight.

My love's what's in the kiss and not my lips,
What breaks my voice
And not the breast.
My love's a wind from God that in its blast
Profoundly penetrates my flesh
and passes.

### Ecstasy

Please, Christ, close now my lids,
put frost upon my lips,
for every hour, extra is,
and all my words are said.

### To the Hebrew People

O Jewish race, flesh of eternal pain,
ah, Jewish race, stream of all bitterness,
like sky and earth, surpass duress
and grow until your goal you gain!

### Corn

The ancient law of the corn,
fallen do not perish,
and the men who live from corn,
are gambled, never lost.

### Southern Forest

It comes as a shadow, a gesture,
from ephemeral passes to certain—
the long, long darkness of nightfall
that orders us with its call
and binds the feet of the Andes
or divides them as it rises.

## Drink

At the ruins of Mitla, one day
of katydids, sweat, and sun,
I found a spring and an Indian came
to support me over the water
and my head he held, protected there,
between his calloused palms.
And I drank there what nature gave,
his features with my face,
and in a lightning stroke I knew
his Mitla flesh, my race.

## Laborer's Hands

I hear them manage the looms;
in ovens scraped and torn.
The forges leave them half opened,
the flow of wheat, interclasped.
I've seen them clinched in mine tunnels,
and blue from the hard quarry dust.
They rowed for me in launches,
combatting the tortured waves.
And my grave they will surely fashion
though suffering never I caused.

E.J.

## ALFONSO ARINOS

### Brazil

Much of last century was a violent one in Brazil as the states and the federal government vied for power. States rights was a burning question and many battles were fought to try to resolve the dispute. Local people had to take a stand—state or federal—and this story by one of Brazil's best descriptive writers recounts the sacrifices made by a family to support its beliefs.

### Joaquim Mironga

As I was saying, I closed the gate, fastened it, and entered stealthily. The patio was gloomy. Nothing stirred. This was the time of the fierce war of '42. The Old Man was hiding out. Hiding out is one way to describe it for he slept, what little sleep he got, in a palm shack in the middle of the brush, but he wandered from one herd to another throughout the day, hardly losing sight of the house where his family was. I stuck to him like a leech, for after all's said and done, he's never been mean to me, God be praised, and my family has served the boss' people through thick and thin since the time of my oldest kin.

When the forces of the now dead Colonel Joaquim Pimental entered the city to capture the rebels, the Old Man knew about it. He was a smart old codger and never left himself up the creek without a paddle. And the boss' wife was about to have a baby, that tad of a boy you saw here today, Neco himself.

One day when we had just finished supper at the ranch house and I had gone down to the harness room, I spied far down the road that comes from Barra-da-Egua, some horsemen traveling slowly as if they didn't know their way in these parts and suspected trouble. I hurried back up to the ranch house and pointed them out to the boss.

"That looks to me like a patrol and they've probably come to capture you."

My God, what I said! All cain let loose in the house. The boss' wife was scared half to death and started to cry; the maids took off running for their quarters. No doubt they lit a blessed candle before the statue of the Baby Jesus, and the boss' wife began to pray, together with the maids and the serving boys. The Old Man didn't leave the porch. He shouted for the cowboys and the Negro laborers.

"Today's the day!" I said to myself.

Out they came with every weapon they could lay their hands on: carbines, blunderbusses, even catapults. What men! Not even I like to remember those days.

The young fellow, little Juca, eldest son of the boss, still didn't have, as they say, even a shadow of a beard. He was just a wild sprout of a boy. I remember how hard it was to keep him in hand during the roundup. There wasn't a young bull he didn't crack with the whip nor a colt he didn't try to straddle. He was about to turn sixteen but didn't look it.

By St. Sebastian, Help of the Afflicted, when I have to recount these hateful memories, I get a bitter taste in my mouth.

Mironga exhaled sharply and, pulling a cigarette out of his hatband, struck a match, lit it, and inhaled the smoke.

His buddies, shifting position to make themselves more comfortable, murmured:

"That Joaquim is tough, tougher than the hide of the devil. He's been around."

You know, continued Joaquim, that in front of the ranch house, beyond the stone walls, there's a property line fence made of logs. It was put there to keep the cattle from breaking into the clearing when they stampede. Thank God it was there. We kept the patrol under fire there for a day and half the night. The soldiers were all cavalrymen but not from the Amazon and for that reason didn't know our hideouts. It wasn't hard to fool the devils. And the Preto River, how I love her, was our salvation. She passes right through the middle of the ranch, separating the colt pasture from that of the mares. At dusk we were in the ranch house but by dawn we were gone. Under cover of darkness we took the trail for the lower pasture: I, the boss, his wife, the kids, maids, all the house servants; the line riders and farmhands stayed to 'entertain' the soldiers, blasting away all through the night.

You remember, Pio, the canoe in which the boss hunted tapirs down river?

Of course. Why not?

In that same boat we crossed everybody over to the other side, I poling and Basilio rowing. When we reached the other bank, goodbye patrol! There was no bridge nor ford. If they wanted to follow us, they had to swim the river or if they didn't want to swim, they would have to ride up and cross the headwaters because all our boats were well hidden on the other side.

We reached the other bank with no problems and settled the family into a line rider bunk house some two leagues away.

"Until they also find a way to cross, we have some time," I told myself.

The lad, little Juca, from the time we left, appeared half upset, with his face fixed in a somber expression. He had been very stubborn with the Old Man, wanting to stay. He said that these fishy demons shouldn't have been allowed to take over the hacienda by firing off a couple of rounds of hot lead. But this made the boss so mad that he wouldn't even look at him during the rest of the trip across the river. The boss knew the kid wasn't joking and if he didn't handle him with a heavy hand, he was just capable of heading back to push the fight with the patrol.

We settled down in the bunkhouse and the family adjusted to the new surroundings. The Old Man was used to working hard so he took advantage of the time to look after the livestock grazing nearby.

And then things began to get rough.

The troops finally took over the farm headquarters on the other side of the river, but only after a tough battle. Our boys who could flee, fled; those that weren't killed in the battle, were captured by the patrol. These hellish bandits had already slaughtered a lot of the ranch's brood cattle and finished off all the hogs in the fattening pens. This news was brought back to the Old Man and he was irate. His wife had to keep a firm grip on him all the time for he walked in circles, fidgeted, paced up and down, and talked continually about licking this problem once and for all, either dying or teaching those outcasts a lesson.

There are a lot of traitors in this world, as you know. One of these ruthless characters, that Our Lord has since eliminated from this earth and we hope has pardoned, told about the bunkhouse where the boss was hiding.

We knew that with little doubt they were getting many of their own stinking kind together at Tapera, some four leagues away, so they could capture the boss. Those devils were bloodthirsty in their treatment with the captured men because, they said, the boss was the most dauntless rebel of the region.

The Old Man was beside himself with rage. He wanted to give chase to the bandits at all costs but his wife was already in such bad condition that we were afraid she would have a relapse and die. For this reason, there wasn't a thing in the world the boss could do but wait it out, as God willed. Seeing that from one minute to the next we might be surrounded and fall prey to those vultures, he called me and said straight out:

"Joaquim, I have no intention of falling into the hands of these devils, nor do I want locked up in prison. But the situation is really getting ugly. If it weren't for the Missus . . . Listen; disguise yourself whatever way you can and go into Tapera like someone passing through. Keep your ears open and figure out what they're up to. See how many there are, if they are well armed . . . You're no fool and know perfectly well what I want. We need to know what they are planning if we are to escape this trap."

"Your Honor knows me" . . . I choked up. "I'll arrange everything." The conversation stopped there. A long explanation was unnecessary.

I headed for my room and got my knapsack, my oldest companion. In it I put some gunpowder, a thick jacket, and a chunk of manioc bread. In a small sack inside, I put a piece of tobacco and some corn husk cigarette papers.

"I'm ready!" then I caught sight of Moses, my carbine, rusting in the corner. It seemed as if the old firearm spoke:

"I want to go, too, Joaquim." I gave in, polished her up well, cleaned out the barrel, put a new flint under the hammer and loaded her. Nearby was a roseapple tree; after picking one and patting my trusty gun, I tossed the fruit into the air, threw up the gun and fired —the apple disintegrated.

"OK, Mr. Joaquim," I said to myself, "you're a pretty fair sharpshooter! And that's what counts!"

I tied the carbine to the saddle holster, tightened the cinch on the old paint horse, checked the martingale and crupper, laid a good sheepskin over the saddle and tied it down with an extra cinch.

I don't care much for firearms, but my bullwhip that cuts things down to my size, better than a javelin, that I don't go anywhere without. I unsheathed the metal tip and gave it a whack on the doorsill; it was solid and sharp. I wanted to make sure it was fastened tightly.

Finally, after touching the rosary around my neck, I pulled up onto the back of my mount.

"OK! Now is the hour!"

The youngster, Juca, was watching over the whole proceedings, trying to get me to tell what had been said with his father. He kept messing around close, to figure out what was going on. The kid gritted his teeth, tore his hair, ranted and raved—did everything he could to find out because he wanted to have a set-to with the outlaws. I never saw the likes of that kid.

"I've got to go! I've got to go!" he said, pounding his left palm with his fist. "I've got to go!"

"You're not going, young master, because the boss doesn't want you to."

He shut up and disappeared.

When I had already gone a long way, I heard hoofbeats behind me. It was the boy on a little blazed-face chestnut that few could beat. The kid was bent over in the saddle like a professional jockey and the horse was really flying, flattened out til his belly almost scraped the ground. When I was leaving the ranch, Juca already had the horse ready, hidden. And he took the trail and lit out without fooling around.

"Now the fat's in the fire! Holy Mother, what's to be done now?"

"There's nothing can be done, Joaquim, let's get going. I'll show you that I'm tough."

Inside, my heart jumped with joy to see the determination of that boy. I had practically raised him myself and he was the apple of my eye.

"Well, the harm's already done. What will be, will be," I thought; "it's not my fault that he has come. If he came, it's because he really likes this old mulatto."

"OK, *Nhônhô,* now you're going to listen to me. When we arrive in Tapera, I'm the one that will enter first. You stay hidden close by. If these men take me prisoner or kill me, you'll know it right away for they won't fool around about it. If that happens, you're to race back so fast you don't touch the ground, and tell the master."

"You'll see that I'm rough and ready, Joaquim. Let's go."

Cautiously we entered the area around Tapera.

"There may be spies around here, Little Boss, so let's cut through the fields to the road from Boa-Vista; we'll trick these guys into thinking we are travelers from Vão." And that's what we did.

Just before we got to the main buildings of Tapera, I made the boy hide in a clump of brush. From there he could see the house and the corral in front. I rode on up without seeing anyone. As I walked up the steps of the headquarters house, I shouted:

"Anyone home?"

A door opened and an Indian with a hairlip appeared, responding:

"Hello outside! Come in and have a drink of *mate;* the pot's on."

I went in and saw more than twenty persons in the living room, some squatting down, others standing — all of them griping. The walls were hanging full of guns hooked on pegs. The men looked me over from bottom to top and top to bottom, really giving me the once-over.

"Even though it's bad manners to ask, young fellow, who are you?" growled a grayhaired, pockmarked character.

"I'm Manual João, at your service. I live at Vão, near Morrinhos camp and I'm on my way to the city to buy a load of stock salt. I scout ahead; the wagon will be along in a couple of days."

"Don't you know that we are at war and that no one passes through without my say-so?"

"But, sir, I always have to ask permission, I know that."

"And if I give you safe passage?"

"Might be that I make it through safely, but he that keeps his eyes open everywhere is the one that does all right in this world."

I kept alert, watching each man and edging toward the door. I already had in mind the trick to be played on these devils.

The man sat silently, thinking . . . then crossed his legs over the back of the bench where he was seated and said:

"Do you know anything about these birds that live around here?"

"Look, boss, I live a long way from here; I know nothing about these people. I've heard a rumor or two but you can't believe everything you hear."

No more were the words out of my mouth when a lanky guy named Anselmo appeared in the door. The good-for-nothing had worked a few days with me, trailing a head of cattle up to the main ranch. The demon gaped, then asked:

"Is that you Joaquim? Did you quit the sargeant major (my boss had held that rank in the army)? What the devil are you doing around here?"

That's all that was needed. Chico Duarte, captain of these critters, shouted:

"So, you rascal, you wanted to get next to me? Grab him, boys." And things really got hot. Anselmo yelled for them to nab me quickly.

I had left my carbine strapped to the holster and the bullwhip was outside, too. I made a flying leap for the door and when Anselmo tried to head me off, I gave him a shove that slammed him against the wall. All this happened in a flash! I took off down the steps and leaped into the paint's saddle. He quivered as I lit, then wheeling sharply, took off in a gallop. I bent over the animal's neck and shouted in his ear:

"Get up, my paint! Save your master, faithful beast!" The gate wasn't high and he flew over the top, landing running on the other side.

At that moment the guns started blasting from the house but it was already getting dusk and the men, firing from the windows and the porch, missed. I looked back, and raising my arm, yelled:

"So long, buddies!"

About that time the alarm alerted the rest of the gang. They had been stationed around on the lookout, and they appeared immediately. The moon, in a dark sky, illuminated the growing bunch of horsemen that galloped after me. Then came another and another. One crossed in front of me and hollered:

"Stop, outlaw! or I'll make you eat dirt right now!"

I shied the horse around to the side, grabbed my whip, and gave the man a lash across the thigh. He howled and clutched his leg, and the horse, uncontrolled, took off down a bank. I didn't see whether or not the man fell but he surely didn't like the crack he took. I dug my spurs into the paint and jockeying him around, took off like a shot.

"What happened to the boy? Where is he?"

I came upon a bunch of horsemen in front of me, but coming closer, saw that it was only two, fighting, and heard the voice of the kid, Juca:

"Come and get it, buzzards from hell!"

My horse passed near his and with a flick of my whip, I scorched the rump of the chestnut. He lit out in a dead run, just as the other man's blunderbuss belched fire. In the middle of all the trampling hoofbeats, I thought I heard a low groan. I glanced around and saw the youth right along side.

"It was nothing," I thought. But when we had covered better than half a league and were riding through a wash, I looked at the boy and saw that he was pale. This didn't surprise me any. The moon rose higher and from the edge of the woods, the cuckoo sang its mournful tune. Farther on, descending to a creek, I turned around and said in a joking tone:

"It was kind of rough, wasn't it? But we got away from all of them."

"Yes," he said in a husky whisper. On reaching the top, it seemed to me that he pulled up his horse.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing."

"Then spur your animal." And we took off again.

A little farther on he rode slumped over to one side, crouched as if in great pain. Wheeling toward him, I urged:

"Tell me, son, tell your old mulatto what's the matter."

He, straightening up, replied:

"Nothing, Joaquim. Didn't I tell you it was rough?" And we rode again. Shortly afterward, a gale of wind hit us. The leaves and trail grit were whipped up in a whirlwind; our horses, ears pointed forward, raised their heads and charged onward. We had just doubled around a ridge by a perilous side trail, when a night hawk gave its startled trill right at the horses' feet. The boy's mount twisted sideways to avoid the hawk and I noticed that the youngster reeled in the saddle. I spurred forward, and gathering up the frail body in my arms, pulled him from his saddle and seated him across the front of mine. The chestnut, now loose, trotted on ahead.

As the boy leaned back against me, the voice that I was never again to hear, and that to this day tears at my heartstrings, whispered:

"It hurts, Joaquim!"

I prayed aloud to Our Lady: "Mother, have pity on us!"

The lad gave one more faint moan, like that of a newborn lamb, without a mother, dying for lack of milk and warmth.

At this point the voice of the old cowhand deepend to a sound like the thundering drum of a waterfall, from far down in a mountain cave. Not one cowboy sat relaxed. All of them now stood close to Mironga, heads bowed, saddened faces showing their souls' anguish.

When I fastened my arms around the boy to pull him from the saddle, I felt something wet on my hands. I touched the moisture and knew it wasn't sweat. Striking a match, I saw that my right hand was wet with blood!"

Mironga the foreman, stood in the midst of his brave companions with grieving countenance and voice chocked up in his great hairy chest. The fireplace spilled a red glow over those faces that formed the circle around him; all mute, alert, like the warriors of a savage tribe listening to their valiant chief as he gasps out his last words after being mortally wounded in a just completed battle.

Outcasts! Damned buzzards! They apparently were satisfied, and didn't bother the Old Man anymore.

Outside, at the edge of the forest, a hungry pack of wild dogs howled mournfully in the midst of the darkness.

The aged cowboy fell silent.

At the question asked in so many eyes, from so many half-opened mouths, Joaquim Mironga responded with these last words, pointing to the starspangled sky:

He's up there, together with the angels in that blue field, herding the yearlings. E.J.

* * *

*Nhônhô,* affectionate contracted diminutive for Little Master, similar to Massa of the US South.

*Mate,* a herb used for making tea.

## NICOLAS TOLEDO

### Argentina

In the days of the wandering minstrel, songs were the principal source of literature. Operas, musicals, and even folksongs are widely recognized as being a part of our literary heritage. Rarely do we consider, however, that popular songs are more than rhythm and harmony to be enjoyed just as music. Most are very much a part of our literature, whether they tell of events (Green Beret); romance (Rose of Harlem); protest (We Shall Overcome), originally religious; or feeling for a place (The Eyes of Texas Are Upon You).

Although most of the first cowboys, whether in Texas or Argentina, were unable to write, they found full expression for their feelings in their music, and their song styles have lasted longer than they. "The Singing Toad," although written in Argentina, could have been penned by a Texas or Colorado cowboy, hearing in the melancholy song of this little animal, his own thoughts of loneliness.

### The Singing Toad

Songster of the evening, lowly troubadour,
who lives his life a dreaming, by a dark lagoon;
small one of the puddles, grotesque lover in the moor,
through the years enchanted, pining for the moon.

Ah, your sad existence, sing your lonely tune,
Fate inglorious, tragic; yet your spirit struggles on,
Still it is your destiny, always love the moon.
You, like every poet, nightly chanting til the dawn.

Homely little minstrel toad, sing to me your song,
for all life is lonely
and illusion smooths our pathway, e'en though it be long.

Yes, you know you're ugly, deformed little one,
that's why during daytime, hiding, dread the sun,
and at night your ballad, melancholy aire
sounds through dreams in darkness, like a fervent prayer.

Harmonizing voices, insistent and so bold,
monotonous your verses, yet beautiful they are;
don't you know, companion, that the moon is cold
for it gave its lifeblood to a wand'ring star?

Homely little minstrel toad, sing me still your song
for all life is lonely
and illusion smooths the pathway, e'en though it be long.

E.J.

## JUAN VICENTE CAMACHO

### Venezuela

Although a Venezuelan by birth, Juan Vicente Camacho wrote much of his material in Peru, about Peruvians. One of his best known stories, however, is one in which he recounts a religious tradition of his own country. The shrine of Our Lady of Solitude, of which he writes, is still one of the most honored by the Venezuelan people today.

### Our Lady of Solitude

During the latter part of the eighteenth century, near Choroní, lived one of those patriarchal families that are fast disappearing. The head of the family was don Juan de Corro and his wife was Felipa de Ponte y Villena. Some years before, Felipa had been gravely ill after giving birth to their youngest son. Don Juan had prayed to Our Lady for the recovery of his beloved wife and for the life of the new baby, and when his prayers were heard, he had promised to build a shrine to Mary and have placed in it, the finest image Spain's artesans could make.

One day, as they were discussing their desires of having the statue made as soon as possible, one of their older sons, Fernando, came to announce that Don Sancho de Paredes, captain of the armada, was anchored off shore and was about to disembark in a longboat. They received this news with great joy and prevailed upon the captain to contract the making of the statue in Spain and to bring it back on his return to Venezuela. The captain gladly accepted the task and sailed his ships toward the homeland.

Eight months later, with a good wind and a calm sea, the royal ship San Fernando left the Spanish port of Vigo. The first days of the trip were pleasant, but upon entering the Antilles, frequent hurricanes made the Caribbean a temptuous caldron. Finally, one cold, gray morning, the gales raised the foam crowned waves and slammed them against the ship with such force that it nearly capsized. Over and over again, the boat careened into space at the top of giant waves and then plunged into the abysmal depths below.

Captain Sancho had the masts chopped down to reduce the resistence to the wind. Box after box of cargo was thrown overboard until only one remained—that containing the statue of Our Lady of Solitude.

The Captain ordered his men into the long boats and just in time, too, for as soon as had they been carried a few yards away, the San Fernando dug its prow into a mighty wave, spun once around, and with the scream of splintering timbers, broke up and disappeared in the foam.

At almost that same hour, on the seaside hacienda of don Juan de Corro, one of their sons came running to the house to tell them that an enormous box had washed up on the beach. The workers carefully opened the crate and there, before their eyes, was the beautiful statue of Our Lady, clothed in velvet and silks, adorned with gold and jewels. They fell on their knees in awe and adoration.

The priest was called and a solemn procession carried the image to the house where a special Mass was held in honor of the miraculous appearance. Dissatisfied with the painted hair, Felipa had her own long, black tresses sheared and placed on Our Lady's head. Neighbors from miles around came to view and marvel.

A short while later the statue was taken to the chapel of the Third Order of Saint Francis, and after a solemn high Mass, don Juan and his wife stayed to tell the story to the little brothers of this holy saint. Just as they were beginning, in strode Captain Sancho. He paled as he saw Our Lady standing unharmed in her niche, and he fell to his knees, unable to speak.

The image of the Virgin still stands in the San Francisco church. Doña Felipa's hair still adorns the statue, as fresh and brilliant as the day it was shorn from the lady's head. And the thousands of pilgrims who visit there each week, recall with awe, the events of that long ago day.

E.J.

## EDUARDO FREI

### Chile

In 1964, the world anxiously awaited the decision of the people of Chile as they chose between communism and democracy at the polls. Democracy, in the Christian Social Democrat party candidate Eduardo Frei, won. His "peaceful revolution" slogan captured enough votes to make him president of his country and to give him the opportunity to put his ideas of "the benefits of God's creation for all" into practice.

While time alone will allow us to judge the success of his political ideas, his humanitarian ideas have had wide acceptance. His brief, almost terse speeches clearly outline some philosophical points that all nations must ponder.

### Man, Art, and Science

Man began his Education in the Arts. Philosophy, Mathematics, Political and Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences emerged later. Upon analyzing the historic development of these fundamental disciplines, we observe that the Natural Sciences and Mathematics experienced extraordinarily rapid growth. Their application to Production conquered general sympathy and support for them. This has not occurred, however, in the case of the Sciences that concern themselves with the individual and social life of Man, thus producing in our times, a dangerous disequilibrium in the harmonic development of humanity.

It seems to me to be pertinent, when speaking of Science and Technology and their application to the development of this or other continents, to remember a fundamental fact: the Social, Political, and Administrative Sciences, Philosophy itself, History, and the Literary Sciences are also important and decisive in the harmonic process of Development. It is the only path that will allow us to avoid the constant threat of transforming man into a univocal being, impotent in the perception of beauty and indifferent to Love, to Goodness, and to Justice; capable of penetrating the most remote secrets of the cosmos and incapable of living with our fellow beings.

We are living a renascence of Science and Technology greater than man ever dreamed. So that this renascence might penetrate the arteries of human life and be converted into a deep river of wellbeing and happiness, its waters must be mixed with the clear currents that proceed from the Arts and the Human Sciences. This is exactly the synthesis we must seek in our America and we must seek it with mutual endeavor.

E.J.

## JOSE SANTOS CHOCANO

### Peru

José Santos Chocano (1875-1934) is, in the content and tone of his poems, the Peruvian Walt Whitman. He often used Whitman's free style verse but again and again wrote lyrical French style rhyming lines. Much of his writing champions the Andean Indians but he always ties in his Spanish heritage—and a twist of humor. Chocano was perpetually involved in revolutions and several times barely escaped death in battles or before the firing squad. He was the victim of a political plot and was murdered on a streetcar in Santiago, Chile.

### Coat-of-Arms

My savage, native soil inspires this minstrel lay;
America's ideals I chant; my harp has its own soul.
Not from some palm tree pendent, do my verses sway
Like lazy hammocks at the wind's control.
When feel I mostly Inca, then pay I to my king,
The Sun, a vassal's homage and his scepter own.
When Spain's blood wildly courses and the Conquest days I sing,
Then come my verses flowing from ten golden trumpets blown.

My flights of fancy spring, from out some Moorish mold,
The Andes gave me silver; from Leon a thirst for gold,
And these two metals fuse I, with mighty epic roar.
My blood is royal Spanish but from Inca heart it throbs,
And were I not a poet, perhaps I'd seek new jobs,
As emboldened white adventurer
Or stoic Inca emperor.

### The Heights

Silence and loneliness. Nothing moves.
In the distance a line of vicuñas,
running swiftly, barely passes
like a weightless shadow.

Who would dare measure this vastness?
Only the cordillera unfurled,
which afterwards curves on and on
like a colossal parenthesis of snow.

Vain would it be to look for
the happiness of bright colors
in the sadness of the frozen heights.

No butterflies, birds, or flowers—
it's an uninhabited wasteland,
like a soul without its love. E.J.

# OSCAR SORIA

## Bolivia

Bolivia, rich in tin and other minerals, should have given to its people a life of joy and comfort. To some of them it did. And to some people from other lands. But not to most Bolivians. Their humble Indian lives were lived in poverty, misery, through the centuries. Only recently have they begun to hope for something different—and to fight for it. Not all of the fights have been just; sometimes they have simply been political struggles that changed wealth from one hand to another. But the simple man of Bolivia has awakened, as Oscar Soria Bamarra, tells, in a tale as earthy and good hearted as the man whose story it is.

## Mr. Saldo

Mr. Saldo was exactly that: what remained of a man, what was left from a massacre of workers. Which? 1918? 1919? 1923? 1947? He didn't even remember. His legs ended near the ankles, to which were bound with leather thongs, wooden feet. He had two black holes in his neck, as if made by two cruel fingers, and a spot of twisted flesh on his right cheek. Saldo wasn't ugly; he was impressive.

Saldo lived in Andavilque.

Andavilque is four rows of distilleries, just beyond the last clearings on the edge of Catavi. Two little streets intercepted by a third. A few half ruined walls. At night the phonograph dances, the phonoraph that wound up or ran from batteries, or the guitars in unequal counterpoint, sing out their dances. During the day the eternal come and go of Indian men and women; carrying, stirring, pouring; making alcohol for the city. At dawn the coo of the doves, the braying of donkeys carrying immense loads from the mountains, and the lamenting voices of sad Indians as they sing their who knows what sad ancestral cry:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Kara-pampa sonkoy-kipi* | In the arid plains of your soul, |
| *Ay! Ay! mi dueño!* | Ay! Ay! my love, we part! |
| *amorniyta tarporkani* | Went I then to seek my love |
| *como un sueño.* | In your dreaming heart. |

*Cosechata okarej rispa,*
*Ay! Ay! mi dueño!*
*quishcas-llahuan tincorkani,*
*como un sueño.*

And when went I for the harvest,
Ay! Ay! my love, we part!
Found I growing there a thornbush,
In your dreaming heart.

Saldo was something unique and special in Andavilque: like the colored signs that adorn each of the doors of the distilleries. He came and went through the three sandy streets; entered and left every door. The slap of his wooden feet, his mighty arms supporting almost all the force of that painful locomotion, his thick torso, the scrape of the leather and wood across the earth, were popular in the patio of every house.

But at times Saldo grew tired. A sadness invaded him. And then, some night, he would take one drink, then another and another. That's when he would complain, tell how this mutilation of his body had come about, mutilation of his whole life, that left him without a wife or sons.

And Saldo relates the story, so many times repeated, before an inattentive audience:

"They let us advance over the plain. Suddenly military orders were heard. And the machineguns began . . . ta . . . ta . . . ta . . .ta!"

Saldo never left Andavilque. The last time he did, three years ago, they had made him promise never to leave the neighborhood again. The company didn't want him exposed to the stares of the people that come from Catavi: commissions, tourists, university students. Among the things that shouldn't be seen and that the management carefully excluded from the programs carefully prepared for visitors, together with some rooms of doubtful conditions, some primitive and deficient dwellings, together with Andavilque itself, was Saldo. But he was accustomed to it. He never left Andavilque. He didn't even want to leave.

The Revolution of April, 1952, came to Andavilque in the form of brief comments: "They say there have been shots in La Paz. Some were killed. Some miners went from Catavi to fight."

Saldo knew how this was. He had lived through many revolutions since a boy. Death. Wounded. Some without arms, legs. Widows. Orphans. Saldo knew; he saw it again in his mind.

And then the dynamite blasts were heard in the streets of Catavi and from the nearby hills. And the shouts raised in the night, husky with the fury contained for so many years and years: "Long live the Revolution!" "Down with Rosca!"

In Andavilque the complaints changed to shouts, lamentable memories changed to deeds, the desperate hand gestures changed to clinched fists. Saldo saw and heard it all without interest; after all, nothing would change for him.

One night, one of the labor union leaders that talked so much about the Revolution and its consequences, approached Saldo, noting his mutilated legs, said:

"Look, man, you're going to be able to leave. Go where you want. You can go to the Office of Rehabilitation in La Paz. There they will cure you, give you new legs. And you'll walk again."

The 31st of October, 1952, came . . . and victory.

They had told Saldo that the President was going to come from La Paz and that from that day on the mines were to belong to the miners. That the old leaders had been defeated between Catavi and Llallagua. They were going to hold a big meeting to listen to Our Excellency. And Saldo asked:

"And the boss?"

"Let's go! You can go, too."

Saldo almost believed. He was believing. He had seen many pass, workers and children, women and servants. And suddenly Saldo surprised even himself, working his way up the road. And they opened a path for him to the front of the platform. He didn't miss a single detail of the ceremony of the nationalization of the mines.

Three days later, Saldo was saying goodbye. A ridiculously small bag of his belongings was hung over his massive shoulder. He wore a frayed but clean coat, his wooden feet shone as though sandpapered. There was something definitely dignified about his carriage.

*"Causaspa ricucuna cama, ah!"* (Luck be with you til we meet again!) an Indian girl said. *"Dius munachun, señoray,"* (As God wills,) he replied. And one old lady, seeing the change in him, asked:

"What's happened to you, Saldo?"

He wanted to answer but didn't know what to say. The only thing he could get out was:

"That day. . . ."

And that is the explanation: that day . . . He still remembered the voice urging him:

"Get up! And like the air, the sky, go where you will."

And he did. Like many others, a whole class, an entire nation. He went measuring the earth, step by step. Plowing, mining, washing, selling—slow steps but their own, without owners, free men. Climbing, falling, getting up again. At times without knowing why, at times without design or destiny, but nevertheless, climbing and moving.

And that's why the explanation of Saldo is good. That day he also took part in a revolution, there, inside his chest. Something in his own heart was nationalized that day. Something that gave him determination and drive. And others will come after him . . . until one day!

E.J.

## TRADITIONAL

### Mexico

The Indian of Central Mexico, though small in stature, has one of the biggest, friendliest hearts in the Americas. The wide grin on his face comes from a genuine liking for everyone and a good humor seldom equaled. And not infrequently this good humor is at his own expense. *"La Indita"* (The Indian Girl) laughs, in a musical duet, at his competitive efforts to keep a girl friend.

### The Indian Girl

*He and She*

Indian girl, so very pretty,
on her back some kindling borne,
with the Indian, scythe on shoulder,
would not share her lunch of sweet corn.

*She*

Me, no longer, you may follow;
leave me be, don't bother more.
Traveling, you must sing solo,
thus we'll find the peace we swore.

*He*

Little sweetheart, once you told me,
from your soul you loved me only
and all through the day were lonely,
crying when my face you could not see.

*She*

Yes, my dear, it's true I told you
that with money, you and I'd wed,
but when now your pocket's empty
all my love for you's just fled.

*He*

I will go and make some money
so your heart will fill with gladness.
I will go and make some money
so your heart will fill with gladness.

*She*

While you're gone and earning riches,
other boys will ease my sadness.
While you're gone and earning riches.
other boys will ease my sadness.

*He*

This of boys that ease your sorrow
is a thought I do not treasure.
This of boys that ease your sorrow
is a thought I do not treasure.

*She*

If you like or do not like it,
I will still seek out my pleasure.
If you like or do not like it,
I will still seek out my pleasure.

*He and She*

Let us make a modern promise,
yesterdays were just pretending,
each will travel his own pathway,
friends we go but love rescinding.

E.J.

## TRADITIONAL

### Paraguay

On the banks of the Paraná and Paraguay Rivers, where they flow together in the heartland of the South American jungles, there is a lily that is extraordinary for its beauty, size, and perfume; it is called Victoria Regia (named for Queen Victoria) by botanists but is better known in that part of the world as the Irupé. In the language of the Guaraní Indians, this means "sieve in the water." The leaf is round, and it is crowned with enormous globe-shaped tassels. Victoria Regia, because of its sensitivity, elegance, and exquisite aroma, is called the queen of water flowers and is used as a symbol of peace on that continent.

In the region of Paraguay that borders Brazil, and all along the shores of the Amazon, this marvelous plant grows abundantly; it also blooms in the lakes and marshes, nearly covering the surface and presenting a fantastic sight. The floating disks of the leaves, which measure up to six feet in diameter, smooth and green on top, have an upright rim of about two inches. They resemble trays whose thick, hollow ribs help to sustain them on the surface of the water, even supporting the weight of herons that come to rest there.

The flower, a foot in diameter, grows gracefully at the edge of the round leaf. It is composed of more than a hundred petals which gradually change from pure white to rose to carmine toward the center; some are marbled, others of a transparent red which shines from afar, contrasting sharply with the greenery of the enormous leaves. In the middle, numerous stamens form a crown of yellow and deep scarlet. This flower, daughter of the waters, thrives in the sunlight but its subtle perfume becomes deliciously intense on nights when the moon is full, as if the celestial goddess were sharing part of her serene beauty.

The Irupé is recognized scientifically as a unique member of the nymphaeceous group of plants. The Guaraní Indians have discovered medicinal properties in its leaves, and they sell them in the market for the treatment of asthma and certain heart ailments. The country people are sure that there is no better treatment for "love sickness" than for a couple to bring to the altar of the Virgin an Irupé blossom having no more than fifty white petals. For some tribes the flower is sacred, as the lotus is for the Egyptians. Naturally, many legends have grown up about the flower, including this one from the Guaraní.

### The Legend of Irupé

There was once a beautiful maiden, more beautiful than any who had ever existed. She had the boldness to fall in love with the moon. Gazing up at it so far away, she was jealous of the stars which surrounded her beloved. Oh, how far away was her loved one and how divine on silvery nights! She extended her arms, sighing deeply, but only a moonbeam kiss touched her cheek; her spirit was deeply troubled. At times she felt weak; her eyes, fixed on heaven, shone with love, hopeless though it was.

One day, driven to despair by the strength of her love, she went in search of her celestial sweetheart. It was difficult, but she climbed the mountain, going even beyond the highest trees, and there at the wind-shaken summit, she was overtaken by nightfall. She waited for her lover to join her but the insensible moon, mute, remote, passed without taking notice. She called out, voicing her delirium, and confessed her intense love. But all was in vain. Down she chased toward the valley, following the ridge line with bloody feet, trying to catch up, until, after a long pursuit she watched with tearful eyes as the moon disappeared beyond the mountains.

But one night, the sadness of her impossible love having abated, she came to a beautiful lake in which, like a mirror, the perfect clarity of the sky was reflected. Thirsty, she leaned over the edge to drink, her feverish lips rippling the crystalline waters from whose depths strange points of light shone. She remained as though transfixed, watching the slight tremor of the surface as she saw the resplendant form of her loved one approaching very close. She uttered a cry: "My moon!" Overcome by an emotion of ineffable tenderness, the tearful girl spoke:

"At last you come to me; you have come down to see me now that I have given up hope. Look, I can touch you with my hands, I can kiss you with my lips! I will be all yours! I was born to adore you. There is nothing more sublime than you. Do not be aloof just because I am a daughter of the earth; humble though I am, my love is as big as the world. You are so beautiful, but, why are you so elusive? Perhaps you didn't hear my pleas? Do not flee from me now."

And in supreme ecstasy, she flung herself into the water, plunging deeper and deeper as she tried to seize the moon. The waters closed over the beautiful maiden and she remained there, imprisoned forever with the dream of her unattainable love. Then the god Tupá took compassion and transformed her into the Irupé, whose arrogant leaves have the form of the lunar disk, gazing upward forever as if still calling to the moon.

* * *

There is an ancient verse of an unknown author, dedicated to the legend of the romantic Irupé:

Oh, crown of purity,
aroma and hue:
you are the maiden fair
who yearned for the moon,
but enchanted now sighs
in the dream of a flower.

A.R. & F.D.

## ANA MARIA IZA

### Ecuador

Poetry often springs from great love, deep pain, profound sorrow —but sometimes it simply swells out from the joy of life. Ana María Iza, born just a very few years ago in Quito, Ecuador, like Walt Whitman, writes mostly from pure happiness. Everything has meaning for her and can inspire a thoughtful verse to celebrate its existence.

### Things

Yesterday they invented dawn;
at times the winter's in my eyes;
they falsified the stars of heaven
and smeared the peace of cosmic skies.

The cold was trapped in thermometers,
Saturdays are higher priced;
insomnia's eyes so mammoth are,
they down my pillow slid like iced.

We only lack that forest birds
beat back the dawn with downy wings,
that men asphixiate all hope,
that sunrise from your eyelids springs.

E.J.

## MARIO BENEDETTI

### Uruguay

Photographers, painters, and sculptors have, in many cases, tried to introduce us to the people of their countries.The magazine *National Geographic,* with its beautiful coverage of many peoples of the world, Gaugin's paintings of the South Seas Islanders, and Andrew Wyeth's sculptures of New Englanders are but single examples of this artistry.

Writers, too, have often wanted to leave a word picture of people, and many have done so even better than photographers, painters, and sculptors. One of the best of these "oral portrait painters" is Mario Benedetti, who describes the people of his home, Montevideo, Uruguay, so well without even appearing to do so, that we frequently "feel" with them as well as see them in our mind's eye.

### Such Friends

"The heat's unbearable!" said the waiter.

It appeared that the customer in the blue suit was going to loosen his tie but he finally let his arm drop to his side. Later, with siesta eyes he examined the street through the plate glass window.

"It's not right," the waiter continued, "it's only October and we're already like cooked sausages."

"Oh, it's not that bad," said he of the blue, without conviction.

"No? Then what will January be like?"

"More heat. Don't worry."

From the street a thin man with a hat on peered inside, shading his eyes with his hands to cut the reflection on the window. He recognized the man in blue, opened the door, and approached smiling.

The man in blue didn't notice him until he was right before him. Only then did he offer his hand. The other, with rapid glance, chose the chair that would best fit his seat and sat down without relaxing his muscles.

"How are you?" he asked, still smiling.

"As always," answered the blue.

The waiter came, puffing, to take his order.

"Coffee, weak, please."

For several moments they were silent, looking outside. Among those that passed was an exciting gal in a blouse and he that had just arrived, squirmed in his seat. Afterward he shook his head meaningfully as though looking for the right comment but he in the blue suit didn't even smile.

"It's a good day to be rich," said the other.

"Why?"

"You could stretch out on the bed, think of nothing, and in the evening when it's cool, begin to live again."

"That depends," said blue.

"Oh?"

"One can also live like this."

The waiter came, left the weak coffee, and returned walking spraddle legged so everyone would know the heat and sweat chaffed him.

"My wife is sick. Did you know?" commented the newcomer.

"Oh? What's wrong?"

"I don't know. Fever. And her kidneys hurt."

"Has she seen a doctor?"

"Sure."

Blue suit beckoned to the shoe shine boy who spit out half a toothpick and came over whistling.

"For several days you've been wound up like a top."

"Yes?"

"I know you're mad at me."

The shoe shine boy stopped polishing and looked down, teeth clinched, rolling his eyes.

"The trouble is that you get mad too quickly."

"Is that so?"

"I know that you feel that someone's wronged you and nothing will stop now. Do you know why I did it?"

"Why you did what?"

"See? It's not possible this way. Why don't we talk it out frankly?"

"O.K. Talk."

Both looked at blue's left shoe, beginning to shine. The shoe shine boy gave it the final touch and carefully folded up his shine rag. "Twenty-five cents," he announced. He took the peso, handed back the change, and chewing the half of the toothpick he had saved, whistled off toward another table.

"Did you think I didn't notice? Did you believe I talked to the Old Man to do you harm?"

"And?"

"You know that wasn't why. I'm not an idiot."

"No?"

"I talked to him to defend myself. Everyone said I had entered the office before nine. They all said I had seen that damned paper."

"That's right."

"But I knew you had entered earlier."

A smelly, ragged kid came up to sell mints. They didn't even bother to say no.

"The Boss called me in and told me that this business was serious, that someone had blabbed. And that everyone said I had seen the paper before nine."

Blue said nothing. He carefully smoothed his pants crease and crossed his legs.

"I didn't tell him you had done it," continued the other nervously, as if ready to run or cry. "I told him you had arrived before me, nothing more. You have to realize . . . ."

"I realize."

"I had to defend myself. If I hadn't, they would have fired me. You know full well that I don't run around with girls."

"That's good."

"Sure, you say that because you're a bachelor. You can take risks. I have a wife."

"To hell with you."

The other scraped his cup on his saucer, as if to erase the offense. His eyes shifted from side to side; he was suddenly pale. Afterward, jaded, disconcerted, he raised his head.

"You must understand. I know full well that you want to get rid of me. And you can do it. Why should I go against you? All you have to do is send a telegram to Ugarte and I'm finished. I just say this so you'll realize that I know. I couldn't possible have gone against you when you have the ace in the hole. Now do you understand?"

"Sure, I understand."

The other gestured a feeble protest and accidently knocked a glass over with his elbow. The water poured right over the blue pants.

"Pardon me. It's that I'm nervous."

The waiter approached and picked up the bigger pieces of glass. The heat seemed to have abated. Or it was forgotten.

"At least give me the satisfaction of knowing you won't send a telegram. Last night I couldn't even close my eyes."

"Look. You want me to tell you something? Forget this subject. Cut this talk. I have the impression that you think I'm rotten."

"Then you won't . . . . ?"

"Don't worry."

"I knew you'd understand. Thanks a million. From my heart, buddy."

"Don't worry."

"I always said you were a good guy. After all, you have a right to send the telegram. I was wrong . . . . I recognize it. I must have thought . . . ."

"You're right. It's better to have it out."

He got up slowly, pushing the chair back noisily. He started to shake hands but the look on the other's face discouraged him.

"O.K., so long," he said, "And remember, anytime you need anything . . . . whatever . . . ."

The man in blue barely nodded his head, as if indicating nothing in particular. When the other left, he called the waiter and paid for the coffees and broken glass.

For five minutes he sat quietly, slowly biting a fingernail. Afterward he rose, gestured goodbye with his eyebrows to the shoe shine boy, and opened the door.

He ambled along to the corner and looked over some ties in a showcase. He took a last puff from his cigarette and flipped it under an auto.

*Afterward he crossed the street and entered the telegraph office. E.J.*

## JULIO GARMENDIA

### Venezuela

Venezuela and Texas have much in common: rough and ready heroes in their independence history, Indian wars, the conquest of oil, black gold, from mother earth. And both have produced literature as violent as their histories. But both have also engendered stories so tender and full of pathos that they belie the brawny exterior shown to the public.

### The Two Pennies

Penny has a rabbit but Penny across the street has a toad. Besides her rabbit, Penny has a cat, two dogs, a parakeet, and three white pigeons in a green house. But she has been unable to find a toad, a toad like that of Penny across the street, and her fortune is not complete.

"Penny," she says, "I'll trade you my little silver bell with the blue band for your toad."

But no, Penny across the street wouldn't trade her toad for anything in the world. She's proud of him, that they talk about him—and of her, too, naturally — and that Pablo the gardener says very naturally, when he comes to cut the grass:

"Penny's toad is sleeping under the baskets."

When twilight begins, the toad comes out from under the baskets, or from some humid corner filled with ferns, passes the fence and hops up and down the sidewalk. Penny sees him and always trembles that he might be run over by automobiles, or that a dog will bite him, or that the other Penny's cat will scratch him. To own a toad is difficult and complicates life extraordinarily; it's not the same as owning a dog, a cat, or a parrot. Nor can you cage one up because then the toad won't be happy and that would be a sign that you didn't love him.

Crouched behind the picket fence, the other Penny also anxiously watches the toad hopping in the street and exclaims, profoundly moved:

"That's strange! He can't run nor fly. Poor little toad!"

And she trembles, too, when an automobile comes, or when a dog passes on his way home to supper. At the same time, she thinks, compares. She has so many animals, besides her doll Gisela, and no one ever talks of them. On the other hand, Penny has a toad, just one, and everyone comments on it, laughs, and is pleased. She doesn't like this very much and seems smaller in her own eyes.

"Penny," she says, "besides the bell with the blue band, I'll give you something else. Look! The pigeons are making a nest; they are carrying dry twigs into their house. I'll give you the squabs when they hatch . . . no! when they're big and can eat by themselves."

"No," answered Penny without hesitation, "I wouldn't trade him for anything; he's the only pet I have. Papa doesn't like animals," she added, glancing at the huge empty garden, "but he never sees the toad. He's the only pet I can have and I wouldn't trade him for anything—for aaaaanyTHING!"

"And if I also give you Gisela with all her dresses, the pink, the flowered, the velvet?"

"I've already told you no," responds the inflexible Penny from this side.

"And if I also give you my dog Coco?" she asks, trembling at her own audacity.

"No!"

"And Pelusa, the cat, also?"

"Still not!"

"And King? And Ernestina? And the pigeons in their house?"

"Never! Never!"

"You're dumb," said Penny. "Did you think I was going to give you all those for a toad?"

And that's the way things were. If the toad had had little ones, Penny would have been glad to have given the other Penny one, two, or even three of the little toads. But the lives of toads are strange; nobody knows what they do or don't do. They aren't like pigeons, for example, for you know when they build a nest, how many eggs are laid, how they feed the squabs, what they want, what they do and don't do. But who knows anything about a toad in his own garden? The only thing you know is that sometimes in the night, after it has rained or the flowers have been watered, you hear . . . . . . glo . . glo . . glo . . . . . it's the toad wandering here and there, and that's all.

At the beginning of the rainy season, the same day that the sky clouded up and sent down the first drops, one gray afternoon, Penny left, Penny from this side. She was a sick child; they gave her animals and toys to distract her because they knew she liked them. And maybe, too, without knowing it, to see if they could keep her a little longer, perform the miracle of keeping her alive!

Today we went to visit her in the little graveyard plot where she sleeps. There hidden under the ferns and flowers, in the damp coolness, we saw a toad.

It was Penny's, Penny of across the street, who had taken it there. She had carried it and placed it there.

Penny across the street now has a rabbit, a cat, two dogs, a parakeet, and five or six white pigeons in a green house. And Penny from this side—what have I said? Penny of very far away, has a mysterious friend hidden in the ferns, in the damp little garden where she sleeps; a mysterious friend that hops and croaks near her in the evening when twilight falls. A mysterious and rare friend. E.J.

# SALARRUE

## El Salvador

El Salvador (The Savior) is the smallest Spanish-speaking country in the Americas (Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, all English-speaking, are still smaller). Its rich soils previously provided most of its wealth — sugar cane, coffee, cotton, rice, cattle — and sustenance for the most densely populated nation in Central America. Since World War II, however, a vigorous industrialization has rapidly changed the face of this Pacific Coast region. Many of the customs, traditions, and literature, however, still reflect its former agrarian emphasis. Salarrué, abbreviated name for Salvador Salazar Arrué, was one of the best-loved of the writers on rural El Salvador.

## The Negro

The Negro, Nayo, had arrived on the coast from "a fur piece." His twenty years, brown and kinky, smiled of morning's freshness. He had a certain something that was pleasing, a way that made you sit up and take notice; you could tell that he could take care of himself. At times his skin reflected shades of blue, like the steel blue of a revolver. White and surprised were his eyes; the palms of his hands were faded, like those of a monkey; his left shoulder drooped, gesture of a good natured guy. His hat of woven, golden palm served only for tipping politely, because the sun couldn't darken anything except his teeth. He laughed in short, melodious syllables, throwing his head back as if to release his pack of joy, punctuating each peal of contentment with ooooeee!

Nayo was from "yonder," and that "yonder" was vague, a mixture of Honduras, Berlice (Belize), Chiquimula, and Bluffs (Bluefields, Caribbean coastal area of Nicaragua).

Like an Indian, his feet were short and thick, rough as a root, without toenails — ginger feet; the skin was actually the color of bronzed clay as if the tar shade of the rest of him hadn't quite covered that huge body.

They had taken him on as third corral hand at the hacienda. No one could deny work to this boy with the deep chesty voice. For that matter, no one could deny him anything—candy, cigar, or a drink.

But he was the butt of the jokes of the "white boys" and more than once he hid out to nurse the hurt of feeling picked on. His resentment didn't last long, however, for his heart was big. His "Don't talk to me!" when he was annoyed always dissipated with a friendly clap on the back; then came the wide grin, pearly white.

Chabelo, the head corral hand, was able. He had plenty of friends among the men of the village because he was brave and good looking, gallant and a lady's man—but above all because he accompanied the guitars with a bamboo flute he had made, that sang sweet and sad, just right for the feelings of these rural folk. Nobody knew the secret of that wailing tone. It must have had a spider web inside, or a false reed, or a spiral. The fame of "whistler" Chabelo rested in the oily smoothness of the tones that wafted through the air like a bell. Sundays he was invited everywhere and he charged for his music, whether at a family gathering, dance, wake, or baptism.

One day the Negro, Nayo, spent all morning with Chabelo as he practiced the flute while seated on the stone corral fence. He smiled his adoration while he listened, like the pleasure wagging of a dog's tail.

"Hey, boy, do you want me to teach you to play?"

"Look, buddy, I'd give you my whole Saturday's pay — but don't tease me."

After the first lessons, Chabelo rented the flute to Nayo for a few days. The Negro practiced zealously and learned to play, learned to play so well that the nearest neighbors, three blocks away, perked up an ear and commented:

"Listen! What a player that Chabelo! That melancholy cowhand is pure sound!"

"Right. Ever since yesterday he's been pouring his heart out."

They fell silent . . . and incorporated their silence in that impassioned flute that drowned them in the sweetness of remembrance without memories, of returning without turning back.

In a very short time Nayo surpassed Chabelo's fame. People came from far away to hear him and his usually simple, humble manner bloomed to austere prowess when his cardinal lips blew into that miraculous tube.

Chabelo himself, who thought he knew all the flute's secrets, felt a thrill as he listened — first grudgingly and then not — to the marvelous flow of sentiment so thick you could grab it with your hands.

One golden afternoon when the Negro was doctoring a hogtied calf with a chicken feather dipped in creosote, Chabelo finally made up his mind and a little bashfully asked:

"Look, friend, I'll pay you two bucks if you'll tell me the secret of the flute. You've found something that really gets to people. Be a buddy and tell me."

The Negro stood up, disheveled, mouth white with friendly teeth, and the frank look of a child. His arms sagged like broken wings, the feather in one hand and the creosote bottle in the other. He looked at the rocky ground and meditated hard. Finally, satisfied with his thinking, he answered:

"Don't think I'm being selfish, companion, but there's no secret in the flute — it's me, myself, my sadness, my color." E.J.

## ALONSO DE ERCILLA

### Chile

Don Alonso de Ercilla was born in Spain on the eve of the conquest of America. His father died a few years later and his mother was appointed lady-in-waiting at the royal court. This was a fortunate event for Alonso, because he was reared as companion to the prince who later became King Phillip II and thus he enjoyed the benefits of a very fine education.

As a young man he was chosen to accompany an expedition to Chile and it was here that he lived the experiences retold in his poem "*La Araucana*". This epic (a poetic narration about heroic events) is considered to be one of the best in the world's literature, along with Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, Camões' *Os Lusiadas*, and Hernández' *Martín Fierro*. Its nearly 2800 verses (of eight lines each) are technically well written and almost every line is devoted to battles.

Despite the fact that Alonso was one of the *conquistadores* and fought in many of the skirmishes he describes, he was able to see the good and bad of both the Spanish and the Indians.

The Araucanians were the inhabitants of south central Chile and were divided into many tribes, each with its own chief and senior council. When the Spanish invaded what is now Chile, they saw the conquest and enslavement of the tribes farther north and were determined this would not happen to them. They called an intertribal council and selected Caupolicán as the main general of all the tribes' warriors. (He demonstrated his strength and endurance by holding a huge log over his head for a night and a day!)

Their choice was a good one, for under his leadership the valiant chiefs and warriors drove the Spanish out of their territory, capturing many forts deep in Spanish-held lands. Eventually Caupolicán was captured and suffered a cruel death, but his people did not give up and never were really defeated. After many decades both sides decided to "live and let live" and the two groups slowly mixed together. The Indians were greatly outnumbered, however, and they have all but disappeared in the flood of Europeans that settled Chile.

Alonso de Ercilla returned to Spain after his army service and, in fact, completed the epic there. Chile owes a huge debt to him because had it not been for his poem, many of the events and heroes of this era would never have been known. The selection included here describes the first battle between the Spanish and Araucanians after Caupolicán was elected general.

### The Araucanians

Lincoya, fighting and feeling so strong, then
hacked with fervor the struggling men.
Against his strength none the mace withstood
not even steel helmets, resisting him could.
Cortez, a wound bleeding and still unbound,
bowed his head unable any more to strive,
his mount only carrying him half alive,
frightened and flying toward open ground.

With his head bent down, nearly fainting away,
hither and yon his steed seemed to stray,
but, his consciousness gaining,
shamed of weakness then reining,
returns seeking battle with him who had flayed him.
Turning, he saw him off towards the rim,
the greatest of Indians he'd ever fought,
alert Chief Lincoya, off guard not be caught.

Cortez' skill and bravery was obviously such
that the merest of glimpses inspired all his men.
With strength and agility, with soldier ken,
he swings the mace with firm deft touch.
And like a greyhound loosed with a roar,
lunges ferociously after the boar—
thus he attacked the Araucanian band,
his shield to his breast, his sword in his hand.

Even though he's wounded, gashed open his side,
and his coat-of-mail no protection at all,
something awakes him, arouses a tide
of valiant charging, like battering a wall.
The horse surges forward when nicked with the spur
and Cortez of Lincoya now is so sure;
galloping toward him in relentless stride,
bespattered with blood, not even half dried.

Almagro courageously fought hand to hand
with valiant Guacón, young member of the band.
But the issue by fate was soon decided,
for the Spaniard's hand by luck was guided,
with one thrust Almagro the Indian sabered
opening wide the door for the passage of death.
The young warrior gave up his one last breath,
his lifeblood fled; he no longer labored.

Castañeda rides hard and viciously slashes,
kills and destroys, tramples and smashes.
He Narpo perceives by chance to his right
and his sword swings deftly with furious might.
Narpo's mail rent as though it didn't exit;
his leather breastplate, sword couldn't resist.
With rapier swiftness the cold steel contrived
to kill the great warrior, his life's spirit deprived.

The men of both sides were not just engaged
in the heat of contest, of soldierly fray
but instead with hysterics, inflamed, and enraged,
savage Indians and Spanish held each other at bay.
The cries of the dying, the screams of duress,
the shouts of the victors who vantages press,
all mingle together in unholy din:
they're the sounds of demons, diabolical men.

So long in their rigorous conflict propelled,
arms now sag to their sides, by exhaustion felled.
The green of the valley's all flushed with red
with the blood of the valiant, now suffering or dead.
The west setting sun with its half-circle face
sees men charge without vigor, at slow-motioned pace,
all day in the saddle, without respite they've fought,
that to press one foot forward's an impossible thought.

As though they were signaled both stopped in their tracks,
and cautiously, slowly, began to retire,
still guarded and ready, never turning their backs,
withdrew a short distance from the battlefield's mire.
At exactly the same moment each warrior line stopped,
there endurance departed, men and animals dropped.
And their bone-weary bodies rejoiced in the rest—
each side had the victory, both sides were the best.

* * *

Mr. Ercilla, you no doubt noted, was very partial in his description of the heroes of the battle; he hardly mentions the Araucanian's skills but describes the deeds of the Spanish soldier in great detail.

Nevertheless, and despite the "tie" at the end of this selection, the invaders were pushed out of these Indians' territory through a series of defeats that left King Phillip's regiment all but annihilated. These successes encouraged Caupolicán and the other chiefs so that they were able to hold their own against impossible odds for many decades.
M.J.

# CIRO ALEGRIA

## Peru

The Peruvian Indian, with his patience, endurance, and gentle personality has been a subject of novels, short stories, and poems through the centuries. One of his most sympathetic champions was Ciro Alegria, who wrote of the everyday events of life in The Andes and generally pictured the Indian as wise and having strong character. For many years Alegria was exiled from his home country and during this period wrote some of his best novels. One, particularly, has been translated into many languages and is very popular everywhere, *El Mundo es Ancho y Ajeno*. His short stories, too, have had wide acceptance and in the one reproduced here, his admiring treatment of the Indian of The Andes is clearly evidenced.

### The Stone and the Cross

As the mountain trail grew steeper, the trees dwarfed more and more. The trail heaved through violent curves between scrawny cacti, wind-flattened bushes, and rough rocks. The horses were nearly winded and the riders stopped to talk. Rocks, when rolled off the trail, careened downward, dislodging others and carrying them down the long mountainside until they appeared as grains of sand in the distance of the Andean grandeur.

And then even the bushes and cacti disappeared. The rocks grew into huge boulders, slabs of red and grey, always inclined toward the summit as if they were huge stairsteps leading upward, finally blending into the proud peaks that jutted into a taut sky. Some boulders were scattered across the flatter areas as though they were huts; others were stacked into rough-hewn walls, forming almost circular barriers into infinity. Where there was a little patch of soil, wild grass, *ichu*, grew tenaciously, and the sun formed brilliant mirage pools in its yellow-grey bosom.

The breath of the horses and riders froze into icy glimpses. The cold brought goose pimples to the skin in spite of the thick woolen clothes and heavy vicuña ponchos. The lead man turned his head as he reined in his horse and asked:

"Won't you get altitude sickness, boy?"

The boy answered, "I don't think so. I've climbed as high as the Manancancho with my father."

He who had asked the question eyed the road that struggled upward and spurred his horse onward. He was an old Indian with an expressionless face. Beneath his coarse tule hat, whose shade somewhat concealed the rough face, his eyes sparkled like two black diamonds embedded in stone. The boy following him was a white youngster about ten years old, still new to the long rides through the brush of the Andean crags. That's why his father had assigned the Indian the job of guiding him. The road to the village school crossed wild mountain reaches that grew always lonelier and higher.

The child was white, that was easily noted, although he knew that through his mother's veins coursed a few drops of Indian blood. At any rate, he was considered white because of his color and because he belonged to the landed class, the class that had dominated the Indian people for more than four centuries.

He traveled behind the old man without realizing that the latter was serving him; he was so accustomed to service that he didn't give it a thought. At that moment the boy was thinking about his home and the events of his short life. He really had climbed as far as Manancancho with his father, a mountain on the hacienda that attracted him because of its snowy peak. But these mountains were even higher and perhaps the sickness of the high passes of The Andes would get him when he reached the frozen summit. But, where is that famous cross, he thought.

As they curved around the mountain shoulder, the riders met some men leading a string of tired pack mules, mules that could hardly be seen under their huge loads. An aroma of coca seeped out from the blanketed packs, blankets that would be used as beds for the men that night at the inn. The vivid colors of the blankets were like joyous brushstrokes against the uniformity of the grass and stones.

The guide and boy, with considerable difficulty, made their way through the pack string. Braced between the two packs on one of the mules was a large, beautifully blue, almost lustrous stone.

"A devotional stone," remarked the guide.

The two riders, going as fast as the steep trail allowed, climbed upward quickly and soon left the muleteers in the distance. From time to time they could hear some fragment of the drivers' urging the mules onward, "Uuuuuuuu . . . Aaaaaaaaaa . . . Ah!" Their shouts were multiplied by the echoes until it seemed as if several parties were driving their animals along the rocks. But the immensity of the range soon regained its customary silence. Once in a while the wind would whistle through the rocks. When it ceased, the stony silence, born in the shadowy depths, rose in impetuous majesty toward the sky.

Below, the drivers and their pack string had grown so small that they seemed as a line of busy ants, carrying their burdens. A cloud shadow passed slowly over the mountain steepness, tinting the grass patches a deeper hue. When it moved across the breeze-pushed rushes, the shadow bent and swayed.

The riders took the road that cut obliquely across the ledge hewed out of the mountainside with picks and dynamite. The eyes of the alert animals were bright and their breath heaved. The boy didn't know how to calculate the time it took them to inch across the bare rock cliff, poised over the precipice—perhaps twenty minutes, perhaps an hour. The crossing ended where the trail curved into a doorlike opening and led onto a plain.

The old man mumbled, "At last the plateau!"

It was the Andean plateau, the *puna*. Here the wild grass grew short in the cold desolation of the plain. Behind, another range of mountains rose. The wind blew fiercely, sweeping across the plain, roughing up the grassy meadows, howling. Several paths snaked through the *ichu*, ruts carved in the clay earth by travelers. Huge blue and red stones jutted up on either side like gigantic warts on the earth. Medium sized stones were scarce and there were even fewer that were small enough to be carried. Suddenly the Indian dismounted and walked straight to a rock he had spotted from his horse.

"Shall I get one for you, boy?" he asked.

"No," was the boy's reply.

Nevertheless, the old man looked for another and returned with both. They filled both his large hands. Watching the boy out of the corner of his eye, he tucked them into the saddlebags, one on each side. They rode on then, and he said:

"You have to carry the stones from here. Farther on there aren't any."

The boy, pointing accusingly at the distant pack train, said disdainfully:

"That muleteer with the stone is pretty foolish. Imagine carrying it so far."

"Perhaps he made a promise, son. Look at the cross . . ."

The old man pointed with his index finger to the top of the ridge. The boy couldn't see the cross even though he had good vision but he knew that the Indian, despite his age, probably had better eyesight. The cross must be there.

The devout old man referred to the huge Cross on High, known and revered throughout the entire area as miraculous. It was located above the grass where the trail crossed the highest part of the range. It was customary for every traveler who passed that way to place a stone near its base.

The boy, too, carried something concerning the cross, but he carried it inside, between his chest and back. His father had told him when he left home:

"Don't place a stone at the cross. That's what Indians and *cholos* do—that's for ignorant people."

He remembered the exact words.

The boy knew that his father was not a believer but was a rationalist, something he didn't understand. His mother was a believer and wore a small gold cross on her breast, and let votive candles before a niche in which she kept a statue of Our Sorrowful Lady. The boy thought that if he had time to ask her, she would have told him to place a stone at the cross. He was pondering on this when the Indian's voice reminded him:

"The stone is a form of devotion, little master. Everyone who passes must place a stone."

"Even the masters?"

"The masters, too. It's a devotion."

"I don't believe you. What about my father?"

"To tell the truth, I never passed the Cross on High with him but he must have placed a stone, too."

"That's not true. My father says that's for ignorant people."

"May the Holy Cross forgive the master!"

"A stone is a stone."

"Don't say that, little one. Remember that I saw Doctor Rivas, the village judge, man of letters, man of such learning, place a stone. He even shed a few tears!"

A gust of wind prevented them from talking. It whipped their ponchos, struck their faces. The youth, even though Andean, began to feel the cold. Pools of ice reflected the buffeted figures of horses and riders. The fringes of their ponchos streamed out behind like banners. After the wind had subsided a little, the old man said once more:

"Place your stone, master. Those who don't, encounter evil. And I don't want evil to befall you."

The boy did not answer. He knew the old Indian very well for he lived near the big house in a hut as old as himself. The old man usually called him "boy," by habit, but when he wanted a favor done, he unconsciously changed to "little master." ("Little master, your father promised me a new machete but he has forgotten. Please remind him.")

And again now, the Indian employed "little master." He tried once more:

"Please listen, little master. Years and years ago a Christian named Montuja or something like that, came up from the coast. Yes, that was his name. This Montuja didn't want to place a stone at the cross; he just laughed. He laughed. And who could have predicted what happened: just as he crossed the pampas, on this side of these very ponds, so the story goes, he was struck by lightning and killed on the spot."

"Ha!"

"It's true, little master. And the bolt was clearly meant for him. He was riding with three others who had placed their stones and only Montuja was killed."

"It must have been coincidence. Nothing has ever happened to my father, as you can see."

The old man thought for a while, then added:

"May the Holy Cross forgive the master! But you, son . . . "

The white child, feeling he should not go on arguing with an Indian, interrupted the old man to say:

"Shut up!"

The Indian said no more.

The wind didn't stop blowing in gusts or gales, its persistence made it seem like an icy bath. The boy's hands were stiff and he felt as if his legs were going to sleep. But this could also be due to fatigue and altitude. Perhaps his blood wasn't circulating well. A humming sounded deep in his ears. Deciding quickly, he dismounted, shouting to his guide:

"Lead my horse. Get going!"

Without another word they started, the guide and the two horses in front. The boy draped the poncho across his back. The tips of his toes were cold and stiff and his legs barely obeyed him. He could hardly breathe, as if he needed much more of the thin air, and his heart pounded wildly. He was tired after only ten minutes of walking but he nevertheless continued stubbornly. He had heard his father tell that one sometimes had to travel at altitudes of ten, twelve, fourteen thousand and even higher, in The Andes. He didn't know at what altitude they were at this moment, but without doubt, they were very high. His father had also talked to him about what to do at these altitudes and that's what he was doing. Only it was difficult to even walk. To cross even a flat area was tiring. The altitude robbed him of breath. The shrieking wind had lashed his face as if it were a horsewhip. When he touched his cheek, it burned. His saliva was salty in his mouth. His lips split and bled. The blood showed red on his fingers. He thought how his mother would have nursed his wounds and a deep anguish knotted his throat. The nostalgia for his mother brought obstinate tears to his eyes. He dried them quickly so that the Indian that stupidly carried two stones, couldn't see him crying. Fortunately, he was beginning to warm up and his legs didn't feel so stiff.

Actually, the Indian kept watching the boy on the sly. He felt considerable admiration for this young white lad who was facing adequately his first taste of high altitude, even by the standards of Indian knowledge of the region and his native physical strength. Still, he felt a certain uneasiness, even fear, at the boy's irreverence, in which he thought he saw something typical of all whites, that is, evil. But no Indian would dare to say such a thing out loud. Besides, he had been ordered to keep quiet; anyway, he didn't know the right words to make the boy understand.

The youngster, feeling much better, even his hands had warmed, shouted:

"Wait! I'm going to ride."

The old man brought the horse closer but suggested:

"Wait a little moment."

The Indian dismounted and took a package wrapped in ochre-colored paper from one of the saddle bags. It contained grease used for curing leather. He smeared the boy's face with it, saying as he worked:

"It's good for *puna* burns. You have to cure yourself as I do, boy. These high Andean flats will make you part Indian yet."

The grease smelled bad and he was being treated like leather, yet, without completely abandoning his arrogance, but with caution, because his split lips hurt when stretched, he smiled.

Trotting on, the boy caught sight of the cross standing high above the mountain ledge. There on the highest point, it spread its arms into the immense space of the sky.

In a short while they reached the base of the ridge. The rocks that formed it were brown and blue; not even grass grew among them. The trail climbed, zig-zagging around the boulders to form a path. The trail, as well as the surrounding terrain, was devoid of any stone of carrying size.

Returning to a much earlier conversation, the boy inquired:

"When did the devotional placing of stones begin?"

"No one remembers the beginning. My old father told of it and his old father before him."

"It's right to place votive lamps and light candles before images of saints and crosses—but stones!"

"It's all the same, little master. And besides, the stone is not to be disdained. What would the world be without stone? It would collapse. Rocks hold up the earth."

"That's quite different. My father says that Indians are so ignorant that they even worship rocks. There are rock piles that they believe are gods and they take offerings of coca and *chicha* to them. Isn't the Huara one of them?"

"That's true, little master. It is a pile of stones. But why don't you place a stone at the cross? The cross is the cross."

Both were silent. Neither knew anything of the innumerable mythical stones in their ancestral history, still, in some way, the discussion had disturbed both of them. Beyond the reasons they had given each other, there were others they had been unable to bring from the mind and put into words. The old man felt a confused sorrow for the boy and thought of him as a mutilated being who shrank from the natural alliance with earth and stones. The boy seemed to be just outside of existence, like a rootless tree, or as absurd as a tree with its roots in the air. To be white was in a certain way, a sad thing.

The boy, for his part, would have liked to shake the old man's faith but he found that the word "ignorance" meant little; in fact, it meant nothing at all in the face of such faith. Obviously the man had his own explanation for things and when he didn't, it made no difference. Unable to comprehend these considerations, he accepted them as facts which might be explained later.

The road plunged into a gully and upon climbing out, in the innermost part of the curve toward the peaks, the riders came to the Cross on High. It stood about fifty feet from the road, its timbers blackened by time. The square pedestal on which it stood was completely covered with stones piled there by the devout, a mound extending out to an area of perhaps two hundred yards around.

The Indian dismounted and so did the white boy, the latter to see better what was going on. The old man got the saddlebags down and took out the two stones, placing one in full view right on top of the bags. Holding the other in his hand, he walked over to the pile, and with his eyes chose an appropriate place. He removed his hat and, bowing low in the attitude of prayer, laid his own stone on top of the others. Then he looked at the cross. He did not move his lips but seemed to be praying. There was quiet fervor in his eyes. Under his disheveled white hair, his wrinkled, citron-colored visage reflected the nobility that his untroubled faith gave. There was something profoundly moving and at the same time very dignified about his whole being.

Not wanting to disturb him, the boy walked a short distance away and climbing up a small knoll about halfway up the ridge, he could see the widest panorama of peaks his eyes had ever beheld.

The mountains were etched blue and black on the horizon, their sharp peaks somewhat flattened against the clouds that formed a white ceiling. The hills took on different colors nearer the boy: purple, rose, black, yellow, according to their contours, heights, and distances—sometimes surging upward from the banks of the rivers that meandered like gray serpents. Trimmed with trees and huts at their bases, the mountain slopes contained little earth, and the peaks, except where crowned by sparkling snow, culminated in dramatic crescendos of barren rock. The rock sang its epic clamor of abyss, peak, ledge, ridge and all kinds of mountain sharpness, scalloped summit, lofty heap of stones, and angry spire, in an endless chorus whose grandeur was magnified by their aura of eternity. It was perhaps symbolic that the whole world of stone lay at the foot of the cross: the offerings of a thousand songs, of votive stones carried there through unending time, countless years, by the people of that world of stone.

Silently the boy walked to the saddlebags, picked up the stone, and stepped forward to make his offering. E.J.

## PABLO NERUDA

### Chile

Few poets have had as many of their works translated into as many languages as Pablo Neruda, born in a small Chilean town in 1904. Many poems do not translate easily to other languages because the writer used plays on words, local dialects, unusual word orders, or in some other way made his works dependent upon the language in which it was written. Mr. Neruda's lines are, for the most part, simple and concise, and lend themselves to translation.

Mr. Neruda has been a controversial figure in his country and in others of the Western world because he was, for a time, a philosophical communist. He currently calls himself a radical socialist and speaks in many non-communist countries. Mr. Neruda is a senator in the Chilean Congress.

His poetic style varies a great deal; he is capable of writing in almost any form from romantic to the most modern. "Stone and Birds" and "The Bison Sleeps" from his 1960 book *Las Piedras de Chile* (The Rocks of Chile) are typical of his recent writings.

### Stone and Birds

Birds of the Southern Sea,
rest,
now is the hour
of great solitude, the hour of stone.
I knew every nest,
the home of the diffident
albatross;
I loved his antarctic flight
the somber rectitude of these lonely birds.

Rest now,
in the amphitheatre
of the islands:
no more can I
converse with you;
there are no
    letters nor
        telegraph
between poet and bird:
there is secret music,
just secret wings,
plumage and power.
From what heights, the avid
eyes of cruel gold
seek the silver fugitive!

With closed wings
a meteor dives,
foam spurts in its light
and again flight soars,
soars on high with bleeding fish.

From the archipelagos of Chile,
there where the rain
established its domain
come, cutting the sky,
the great black wings,
and subjugating
territory and distance
of winter,
here in the continent
of solitary stone,
love, waste, life,
you left behind,
venturesome birds
of stone and sea and impossible sky.

E.J.

## The Bison Sleeps

Tranquil is your sleep, rest
with forests also turned to stone,
your dewlap just a line,
your bull neck vegetated curl,

your horns usurped by wind
to waken each new dawn.

E.J.

## FERNANDO DIEZ

### Bolivia

The Indians of Bolivia have a rich cultural heritage and the literature of that Andean nation, almost without exception, reflects the ancient past of these peoples. Development has been slow in reaching the Indians and they maintain the old ways in fantastic mixture with jet airplanes, the United Nations, and satellites. And their beliefs and customs touch many of the whites of the region as shown in this story by Fernando Diez de Medina, for many years the Minister of Education in his country.

### The White Llama

It was a fabulous luck that no one could explain. The mine, that he bought, became rich beyond dreams; the mines he sold always ran out. He only knew victories, never losses in business. He rose from laborer to millionaire, married an aristocratic lady, and humble village son became an industrial giant. He owned mines, factories, and commercial enterprises.

It's not true that a mestizo has to be inferior. On the contrary, it takes the strongest from both, renews it, purifies it, as if the Indian sun were in renascence in the tremendously tired blood of Spain. What do lineages and diplomas matter? In the American world made of fevered urgency, the only thing that counts is audacity and energy. His violent personality of adventurer knew no obstacles; with guns defended his mines, won litigations with astuteness, flattened those who got in his path.

He was a powerful man.

But the most powerful man has his Achilles' heel. And the vulnerable point of miner Rengel was a beautiful girl, his young daughter, whom he loved wildly. Not that she dominated him as happens in some families when many sons give unusual prestige to the only daughter, Leonora, in contrast to her four brothers who had as much energetic genius as their father, was a refined and delicate flower and the center of love for the five. Maybe it was because when she was born, they were robbed of the presence of the other, she who must be praying for them. Neither Rengel nor his sons wanted to remember her. They fell apart when they did. Some secret instinct made her concentrate certain effects in the little one that made her appear astonishingly like her in physique and spirit. And Leonora was for them a ray of tenderness that crossed their impetuous lives.

The Rengels, fighting men, lived a challenge. They were neither killers nor omnipotent; they didn't depend upon their immense fortune for support. They loved danger, difficulties, adventure for adventure, acting with character in their bold, masculine enterprises. At times some were against the others, bowing only to the supreme authority of their father. At times they looked for Leonora's sweetness when the stubbornness of their father united them so they could stand up to his capriciousness.

Rengel loved his sons in just the way they were formed, sons of his violent blood, of his ingenious nobility, returning blow for blow, raised to be strong. They had been raised in the country, in full sun, riding colts bareback, scaling mountains; and only when they were big boys did he bring them to the city to educate them in practical schools.

"The professions and academic titles don't count for anything," enunciated the old man. "You have to fight in this life as I did."

He made them learn the rules of the mercantile trade; he introduced them everywhere so they would learn to handle themselves among men. He didn't want them to be "Rengel's sons," rather each one a vigorous personality of his own—a capable, indomitable Rengel. He pushed them into multiple activities, whatever signified movement, fighting, intense and febrile life, inculcating order and responsibility in them at the same time. Luis Alberto, Jorge, Esteban, Octavio were four bold and arrogant young men.

But Leonora, never was there a sweeter name for a sweeter girl.

When Marco Antonio, son of Montiel the banker, wanted to ask for her hand in marriage, old Rengel was furious. He wanted to go straight to the banker's house and smack him for the audacity of his son.

"No one has the right to disturb a young girl's peace!" thundered the powerful one. "Those that are of age should get married. No one must think of asking for Leonora's hand until she's twenty-one!"

Luis Alberto, the eldest son, limited himself to saying that the postulant was a "sad sack". Octavio gave the opinion that he was insolent. At the moment when Jorge and Esteban were about to come to blows over which should make the young man explain himself, Leonora said softly:

"But if I haven't thought of abandoning you?"

And peace returned to the Rengel "tribe" because the girl's voice pacified the situation.

Years passed. Many things happened in the tumultous lives of the Rengels. The old man grayed in his seventies but each day he was stronger, more indomitable. Luis Alberto was the head man of a socialist group in parliament. Jorge directed an industrial consortium. Esteban was manager of a bank. Octavio owned an airline. Leonora grew into an adorable woman.

One day misfortune spread its wings over the house. Leonora became very ill.

The father and sons consecrated themselves to her bedside. Losing faith in the local doctors, they traveled to Europe and the United States. The best specialists were called in, without regard to costs. All was in vain. Although one thought she had some kind of pernicious anemia, the rest deduced that she suffered from an unknown disease and thus could not be cured. The patient was slowly and inevitably dying.

They returned to their homeland, all hope lost. Leonora grew thinner, could not sleep or eat. In her tender green eyes a sweet melancholy showed. Finally she could no longer rise from her bed.

Then the head of the family, all hope in science vanquished, felt his ancestry awaken in his soul. From forgotten depths, a voice from the land of his birth rose to his heart and he called to his two older sons:

"My sons," he ordered, "go to Potosí and ask in the San Antonio dairy for the Condori family. They are *callaguayas* (native doctors) of the Aymara tribe, that for many years have known the art of curing with herbs and secret formulas. I saw, as a child, impossible cures. Return with the eldest for they know the most. We'll try this way. Luis Alberto and Jorge left hurriedly. Five days later they returned with the *callaguaya.* He was an old Indian, very old, bent of back, his face one mass of wrinkles and his hands mottled and thin.

The millionaire spoke to him and for the first time his voice had a touch of humility:

"*Tatay* (Uncle, Elder)," he said, "my daughter is dying. You are the one who knows most, who can cure. Give her something to make her arise, so she again makes my heart happy." And the old man bit his lips to keep from crying.

The elder Condori looked at him directly and reflected. The furrows on his brow deepened. The only sound in the room was the anxious breathing of the five Rengels. The Indian continued submerged in his world of fog and mystery. Jorge started to repeat the plea, believing his father hadn't been heard but the old miner, who knew the customs of the *callaguayas,* signaled him to silence. They waited. After pondering carefully, Condori replied:

"Sir, you have been good to the Indians. You have built schools. I will help you."

They entered the girl's room and the *callaguaya* approached her. He didn't take her pulse, nor raise her eyelid, nor ask for a thermometer. He just looked, looked with an almost frightening pentration as if to probe out the truth with just his old eyes. After several minutes of expectant observation, he said:

"Many times you may see *Willka,* our father the sun, but you must do as I say."

"We'll do whatever you ask," replied the millionaire.

"Tomorrow at ten at night, I'll return."

The next day was like all the others. Everyone suffering, uneasy. Leonora continued to die slowly. Octavio declared the old man to be false and that he wouldn't return. The old man forced him to silence with a glance. Rengel knew the herb doctor would keep his word.

When the plaza clock struck ten, Condori entered with two young Indians leading a white llama. He asked that no one talk nor interrupt his task.

He had them build a huge bonfire in the patio and ordered the electric light turned off. The four brothers carried the sick girl down in her bed, placing her at a prudent distance from the blaze. The Indian then asked for some poles and tied them together with strong ropes. When this was ready, Condori told the millionaire:

"Sir, all is ready. For a life that is lost, others must pay. Do you still want your daughter cured?"

"Even though it costs a thousand lives!" pleaded Rengel.

The Indian made a sign and the younger ones brought the white llama, beautiful animal, that tamely allowed them to tie him to the poles. His beautiful head and big dark eyes, like velvet, moved tranquilly, innocently, from one to another. He asked for a clay jug. He placed one Indian facing north and another south. He placed the jug between the sickbed and the platform with the llama. He made some esoteric signs, mumbled some incomprehensible phrases, and taking out his knife, touched the ground with both sides of the blade, purified it in the flames, and covering the llama's eyes with one hand, with a single thrust cut the animal's throat. The red, impetuous blood spurted, staining the snow white coat. He fought with his feet to save his life, furiously agitated his head, and bit at the air as if to revenge the attack. The *callaguaya* caught the streaming blood in the clay vessel. In the eyes of the moribund animal blazed a confusion of pain and fear.

Shortly afterward, exhaling a moan like the cry of a child, the llama, convulsed and trembling, died.

Then the herb doctor blew on the blood in the vessel, uttered other enigmatic words, then pointing to the sickbed, spoke out:

"*Karwa,* the llama, who carries loads in high places, now comes below. She will live."

The first to notice the change in Leonora was Octavio:

"Look, she's awakening!"

Slowly the bloom came to the girl's cheeks and coming to, sighed:

"I want to sleep."

They carried the girl back to her room where she slept peacefully. But Condori kept watch at the fire until dawn when he arose, took ashes from the fire and sprinkled them over the llama. He then carefully put the head in his pack and saying nothing to anyone, started back to his mountains.

Leonora awoke at dawn, too, and rested, appeared to be recovering fast.

Old Rengel embraced the Indian as he was leaving and although the *callaguaya* would accept nothing, he was generous with the old man's grandsons and the same day ordered ten more schools built in the countryside.

Leonora became again the beauty of the Rengel tribe and the city. Life began again for the men, bold and clever as ever. The old miner, instead of weakening as the years passed, seemed to grow even stronger, like an oak. Leonora was married now and the mother of two fine sons.

The old man divided his holdings among the members of his family and made handsome charity donations, not trusting to what might happen to his property after his death.

One morning the brothers entered their father's room with the announcement:

"They've discovered oil on our land to the west. We're going there to organize things and we'll be back in eight days." And they left happily, noisily, shaking the floor with their vigorous steps.

The Saturday that they were due to return, Rengel had arisen as optimistic as ever. His grandsons ran to greet him:

"I'm first!"

"I'm first!"

"Grandfather," said the older, "they brought this." And he handed him a telegram marked urgent. But the old man could not find his glasses, and stuffing the message into his pocket, followed the boys out onto the patio.

"Look, grandfather. Look what I found."

And there in the corner, on a pile of straw, was a snow white llama, very small, almost newborn. He blatted with hunger. The boys gave him milk and he calmed down. Raising his eyes to the grandfather, their velvety softness suddenly clouded. A long ago rememberance, since time forgotten, flashed through his mind.

The millionaire hurried up the stone steps, asked for his glasses, and supported by Leonora, read the telegram addressed to his son-in-law:

"Last night a plane from west crashed against mountain. Rengel brothers aboard. No survivors. Prepare family."

At the same time that the tears of the old man and Leonora flooded down, one of the boys shouted to the other:

"Look, brother! The llama has a red collar around his neck."

And the morning sun showed a fine red line around the neck of the animal, like a band placed to show off the whiteness of the pelt, or like the mark of a recent circular wound—as if they had just put back the recently severed head. E.J.

## CARMEN BAEZ

### Mexico

The first thirty years of this century saw Mexico rocked over and over with revolution and counter-revolution. The basic issue was land for the poor farm workers and resulted in the *ejidos* (land held by a community and parceled out to everyone for his use) and ownership by millions of small farmers all across the nation. But battles often were fought because of political ambitions, family rivalries, and general discontent with socio-economic conditions. An enormous quantity of literature grew out of this revolutionary period but few were able to express the troubled times, along with the people's hopes, as has Carmen Baez.

### The Cylinder

She had no owner. Maybe she never had one. The soldiers first encountered her in the area of Huetamo, in a gray village. There she "adopted" the regiment and followed them everywhere.

She was a friend to everyone: the soldiers, the camp followers, even the boss.

Because she was skinny, slender, they called her The Cylinder.

Always faithful, always alert, like a good revolutionary, in her service record were noted more than several skirmishes in which she took just as active a part as the men and women. She never knew fear and confronting the enemy she became furious, so furious that it would have been difficult to defeat her alone. And at night she would be heard howling on the battlefield. When a soldier was sick, The Cylinder was his best companion; never was she accused of treason.

Once the boss, the man of bronze — brawny, arrogant, good — was at the point of losing his life. The mosquitos of the tropical lands are bad. He caught malaria and was flat on his back for several days. And there with him was The Cylinder, without eating or drinking, deep in a mountain cave. And it was The Cylinder who, one night when the boss was really bad, went down to the valley, looked for the soldiers, and led them back to where the boss lay dying. They brought a doctor and water and in a short time he was well again. Only then did The Cylinder leave his side.

* * *

When the regiment was in Churumuco, she fell in love with The Capulin, a huge, black dog, and soon had a family; two pups, tiny and gray. Unfortunately, they were born in Juan Lanas' room.

Juan's woman, Juana The Amazon, was big, ugly, and bad. One night she picked up the pups and headed for the river. The Cylinder went, too, and they reached the bridge. The river below was rapid and turbulent. And she tossed them into the water with the same disdain as if they had been garbage. Luckily, Juan Lanas was nearby. The Cylinder dived into the river and Juan Lanas right behind her. The water carried them far downstream, very far, but finally all four were on the bank.

They returned to the encampment. It wasn't just a switching that Juan gave The Amazon. From then on The Cylinder worshipped Juan Lanas, who was a drunkard but good.

* * *

But he was also a traitor. His own woman told on him. They found him at dawn, crossing the plain with his rifle on his shoulder and three full cartridge belts, heading for the enemy camp.

"Mow him down," said the boss.

And they formed their squad, all silently lined up before him, and cocked their rifles. The commander ordered.

"Aiiiim!"

And all raised their carbines . . . He was going to pronounce the word "fire," when from in front of Juan Lanas' feet rose a mournful, superhuman howl that made the soldiers tremble and lower their weapons: The Cylinder was at the traitor's feet, with her eyes big and yellow, tearful. The commander repeated his orders and when the arms were again raised, ready to spit lead, again from Juan Lanas' feet rose the mournful howl . . . and despite the fact that the commander voiced the word "Fire!", not one cartridge went off. No one could take the chance of wounding her: she was their friend, the only faithful friend of the troops.

And the scene was repeated two, three, four times. They tried to move her by force: impossible. She appeared rabid with rage. Not a few were the soldiers bitten by her. She had become the enemy of every one of them and yet no one dared harm her.

"Keep quiet, Cylinder," Juan Lanas told her with embittered voice. "Can't you see that eventually these dogs will kill you? Get out of here. Leave me alone for a moment."

But she stayed at his feet, with her eyes big and wet.

* * *

By afternoon the boss arrived. He himself went to the draw where they were trying to execute Juan Lanas. When The Cylinder saw him arrive she showed her teeth and shot him a look of anger, of tenderness, of revenge, of begging, of challenge. The boss never understood why that look hit him so hard . . . those big yellow eyes, almost human. In them was all the anguish of the earth's downtrodden who, crying for justice, are at times silent and at times rebelliously threatening to destroy everything.

"Bring The Amazon," he said.

When The Amazon arrived, the woman who had squealed on Juan Lanas, with choked up voice he said:

"Take a good look, Amazon. That's how dogs defend their men!"

* * *

That's why, when long afterward a bullet left The Cylinder stiff on a battlefield, everyone cried, eveyone felt lonely. They buried her in the new cemetery, in a grave dug by Juan Lanas. And the bugles played taps, accompanied by the muted drums: all the military honors than can be accorded the best loved friends fallen in battle from that absurd hail of bullets. E.J.

## BENIFAY

### Chile

Social protest is not unique to the United States—people everywhere are concerned about war, racial prejudice, smog, crimes, and many other aspects of "man's injustice to man," whether they affect them directly or not. And just as our people express their discontent in stories, poems, and songs, so do those of other nations.

When early in 1966, Arturo Millán, a 17-year-old vocalist in Chile, recorded, *"Yo Me He Preguntado Tantas Veces"* (So Many Times I've Asked Myself) on a Demón label, it not only became the number one hit of his nation, but was equally popular all across Latin America. While its heartfelt message is stronger when set to music, the words alone still should make us think about our and others' problems.

### So Many Times I've Asked Myself

Sometimes I ask myself
if instead of hate, rancor,
love could rule our lives much more?

Sometimes I ask myself
if the Negroes' shade of skin
justifies their being lowly among men?

And at times I've asked myself
how the people can abuse or scorn
a little child who asked not to be born?

Listen all who've never thought this through!

Sometimes I ask myself
why we busily destroy
flowers growing in the meadow, just for joy?
Why the woodmen have to raid
the forest glens that give us shade?

And at times I've asked myself
Why the scarcity
of charity?
Why it is that might
makes right?

Why when lacking moral fortitude,
greed and avarice always win
and those with power cannot sin?

Sad the world is for us now!

At times I ask myself
why a war gives some a thrill
and our men are trained to kill?

At times I ask myself
if a wall should separate
people longing to communicate?

And I asked me what was meant
why our gold we always spent
on the things that man abuse
when the money we could use
for mortal suffering to heal
and the world in peace to kneel?

You, too, must right demand!
You, too, must lend a hand!

E.J.

# MANUEL BANDEIRA

## Brazil

Manuel Bandeira, born in 1886, was one of Brazil's best known lyric poets. His verses were full of feeling and despite changes of other poets' styles during his long life, his changed little but were always loved by everyone. The following brief biography is one of his few ventures out of the poetic field. His lyric style is easily noted, however, even in his prose.

Aleijadinho, whose real name was Antônio Francisco Lisboa, lived a tragic life in the state of Minas Gerais. His sculpture, however, was anything but tragic—it is considered to be among man's most important achievements. And when we remember that many of his figures were carved when he had no fingers and suffered excruciating pain, the wonder of his work becomes a miracle.

## Aleijadinho

Antônio Francisco Lisboa was born in 1738, the illegitimate son of a Portuguese artisan and a Negro slave. His father married when Antônio was a small boy and took him to live with the rest of the family. Despite this good fortune, for it was from his father that Antônio learned sculpting, he attended school very little, probably less than one year. He was an avid reader and later as an adult, read constantly from the Bible, from which he drew most of the inspiration for his sculptures and church designs. He also read books of medicine in search of knowledge for the treatment and relief of the terrible disease that later ravaged his body. His self-education extended to technical subjects concerning building construction and he often calculated costs and wrote the contracts for his father.

According to information collected after his death, Aleijadinho was a dark mulatto, of short stature, with a stout and disfigured body. He had a regular nose, slightly pointed; his forehead was long. His hair was black, thick, and curly; his voice, strong; his speech, impetuous. Sometime during his youth he married but almost nothing is known of his family except that he had a son and devoted daughter-in-law. Until he was middle aged he had perfect health, which however he abused, being very taken with wine, women, and popular merrymakings.

What strange disease was it, that during at least thirty-seven years, afflicted, disfigured, and mutilated that mestizo's robust physique? It is generally thought that he suffered from leprosy, Hansen's disease, which at that time was incurable.

Aleijadinho frequently endured violent pain, so agonizing that it even drove him to pound his fingers with his own stone working instruments, trying to relieve the suffering. All of his toes fell off and after that he was able to walk only on his knees. He had special leather pads made and was able to climb stairs with great agility. He also lost almost all his fingers, so that to be able to work, the hammer and chisel were tied to his hands and later his wrists. It was this way that, at an advanced age, he sculpted the twelve statues of the prophets and the seventy-some figures of the Way of the Cross in the town of Congonhas do Campo.

And yet the disease, far from defeating Antônio's spirit, stimulated his extraordinary capacity for work. The principal effect was that it segregated him from society. He began to avoid people, and in the early hours of the morning he would be on the road to the locale in which he was to work, almost always a church or chapel, from which he returned only after night had fallen. He always went on horseback, disguised in an ample cape and slouch hat, shunning encounters and greetings.

At the site of his work, he put up a covering like a tent and did not like onlookers. When anyone dared to approach him, even if it were a person of high status—as befell the Captain-General Bernardo de Lorena, Aleijadinho attacked his work with such force that a shower of chips soon put the intruder to flight. Other than to work, Antônio left his house only to attend Mass, which he always did at the Cathedral of the Conception in the City of Ouro Prêto.

During this part of his life, Antônio lived with his daughter-in-law. He spent his last months paralized and blind, on a small bed frame (three planks of wood), continually imploring the Lord to "use his body as a stepping stone for His divine feet." He died on the eighteenth of November, 1814.

It should be understood that the nickname of Aleijadinho (Little Alex) is significant and of pure Brazilian compassion and meekness. The man to which it was applied was neither shallow nor small. He was formidable even in his deformity. He was not weak in physique, morals, nor in art—there was not a trace of sentimental tepidness. All of his works of architecture and sculpture are of a strength, of a robustness, of a dignity that no other plastic artist has achieved. In his churches, which show an almost genius adaptation of the barroque to the mining environment of the eighteenth century in Brazil, he never created the atmosphere of mysticism, almost painful, that existed in many other famous churches. In the naves of Antônio Francisco Lisboa you can see that belief was clear and concrete; it never seeks special symbolism. There is no appeal to ecstasy, to mystery, to enlightenment. Like his life, his works are bold and calm, a studied comprehension of this earth and the hereafter. B.J.

## FRANCISCO MONTERDE

### Mexico

Most people in the United States have never known the abject poverty that most of the world's population suffers. Suffering that comes from just barely earning enough to halfway ease the gnawing pains of hunger—and then one day, not even that.

Francisco Monterde, one of Mexico's most prolific writers, knew this terrible sensation. And despite his tremendous sorrow for the misery of mankind, he was able to share men's little triumphs, their fleeting joys.

### A Gold Coin

That Christmas was a happy one for at least one poor man: Andrés, who had had no work since fall.

He was crossing the park one evening when he saw on the ground, a coin that reflected the cold light of the moon. He immediately thought it to be copper but when he picked it up, surprised at its weight, he changed his opinion: "It's a medal, fallen from its chain," he thought. It had been a long time since he'd had a gold coin in his hands and that's why he had forgotten what they were like. As he came out into the light at the edge of the park, he examined the coin and was convinced it was gold.

Feeling the coin, Andrés understood why misers piled up a mountain of treasure just to caress them when alone. To hold one was so pleasing!

With the coin between his fingers, he put his hand in his pants pocket. He couldn't bear to let loose the coin for fear of losing it as had the one who had lost it in the park, he who had owned it before. For sure it wasn't a poor man, he thought, the poor rarely have a gold coin. He was no doubt rich and the loss of the coin wouldn't even be noticed; no doubt he had many others like it. And Andrés reflected, like an exemplary personage of a story, that if he knew who had lost it, rich or poor, he would return the coin even without a reward.

When he finally let the coin loose, after assuring himself that there were no holes in his pocket, it was warm, as though it had a life of its own.

While Andrés hurried along toward his house, the gold coin bounced happily in his pocket. But since it had no companions, its happiness was silent.

A doubt assaulted Andrés: could it be false? He stopped at the corner and examined it again at a lamp post. He saw the lettering clearly etched; it made him start dreaming. Its appearance, its ring—clear and fine — brought tranquillity back. To completely satisfy himself, he thought about entering a store and buying something with it. If they accepted it, then it was undoubtedly good. But it would be better to show it to someone that he could count on to tell him the truth. Andrés preferred taking it home.

The street didn't seem as long as other nights, nights when he returned defeated from his struggle to find work, for now he thought of his wife's surprise when he showed her the gold coin.

* * *

His house, two humble rooms, was dark and empty when he arrived. His wife had gone out, with the child, to turn in the sewing she had done that day.

He lit the lamp and sat down to wait for them at the unpainted table. With the corner of the red checked table cloth he shined the coin and when he heard their voices draw near, hid it underneath.

The little girl came in first, running; he clasped her in his arms, kissed her forehead, and put her on his lap. Then his wife entered, with sad face, and inquired:

"Did you find work? I couldn't buy bread because they didn't pay me for the sewing."

Instead of answering, Andrés grinned and raised the cloth.

The woman, almost shocked, took the coin in her hands. Andrés was afraid she'd say it was false but she just said:

"Who gave it to you?"

"No one. I found it."

And he told the story of the encounter. To better explain, he placed the coin on the floor and backed up a few steps.

"I came along like this, walking . . . ."

The little girl hurried over and grabbed up the coin. Holding it in her left palm, she tossed it into the air and it rolled across the floor. Andrés scrambled after it, afraid.

"Be careful! We don't want it lost in a crack or hole!"

He guarded the coin in his jacket pocket and sat down at the table.

"What shall we buy with it?"

"We have to pay . . . . We owe so much!" sighed his wife.

"That's true, but remember that this is Christmas Eve. We have to celebrate, don't you agree?"

The woman was opposed to this. They must pay first. Andrés, in a bad humor, took off his jacket and hung it on the chair back.

"OK," he said, "we'll celebrate Christmas Eve without supper, even though we have a gold coin."

Consoling him, his wife murmurred:

"We could buy a little something and save the rest."

This Andrés accepted. He put his jacket on again and left the house. At the store he bought the food and when the package was ready, Andrés looked for the coin, first in his pants and then the jacket. But the money wasn't in any of his pockets. Soberly he searched them all again—in his pants, in his jacket—it wasn't there. When convinced that he didn't have it, he excused himself and left.

In a little time, anguished, he hurried through the streets that separated the store and his house. Entering, he saw the child asleep with her head on her folded arms at the table and his wife near by, sewing. He couldn't bear to say it. Finally he murmurred:

"The coin . . . ."

"What?"

"I lost it."

"How?"

The child jumped, opened her eyes, dropped her arms, and then they heard, under the table, the soft ring-a-ling of the gold coin.

Andrés and his wife, grinning, bent to pick up the coin that the child had taken from the pocket of his jacket while it was hanging on the chair back. E.J.

## TRADITIONAL

### Peru

The Quechua Indians live in parts of Peru, Bolivia, and Chile and although until recently had no written language, have a wealth of stories, songs, and poems. These often reflect their difficult toil in the high, cold Andean regions and yet have a subtlety of feeling unsurpassed in the literature of any people.

### That Green Mountain

From that green mountain
sheep come down,
some sheared,
others without ears.

On the black mountain
fog falls;
from thy beautiful eyes,
liquid crystal.

C.A.

# TRADITIONAL

## Brazil

The author of the following story is unknown, for the Indians of Southern Brazil have kept the fable alive by retelling it through the years. This version was told by an elderly Guarani Indian in the state of Matto Grosso some time ago. Note that the storyteller either mixed up his animals or "forgot" that the common house cat came to Brazil with the Europeans and was not there when the "Guarani people were very young."

### The Curious Ant

It is said that long ago, when the Guarani people were very young, there lived a colony of tiny ants in the then snowy hills of Southern Brazil. The snow had lain on the ground so long that the ants had eaten their winter's food supply and someone had to go out into the cold to search for more. One brave little worker struck out early in the morning but had not taken but a few steps when the cold froze her feet to the snow. She struggled and struggled but could not pull her feet loose.

"Snow," she said, "you are very strong. You hold all six of my feet so tightly that I cannot move one of them. Surely you must be the strongest thing in the world."

"Yes, I can hold you," said the Snow, "But I am not the strongest thing in the world. Look there! Here comes the sun peeping over the mountain. Within a few minutes his warm rays will reach here and I will melt enough so that you will be free. And there is nothing I can do about it." So it was, and in a few minutes the ant was free. She hurried up to the tallest peak and spoke to the sun:

"Mr. Sun, your warmth melted the Snow that held my feet. You, sir, must be the strongest thing in the world." The Sun smiled down and replied:

"I am very strong, Miss Ant, but not the strongest thing in the world. See that Cloud? She will come this way, hide my face, and I am helpless." And, indeed, the Cloud did come and cover the face of the Sun, and the Ant said:

"Miss Cloud, you are so very strong that you can hide the face of the Sun, that melted the Snow, that held my feet fast." The Cloud frowned down on the tiny Ant and rumbled:

"I may be very strong but there is one that is stronger than I—the Wind. He comes along and blows me wherever he wants. He is far stronger than I." And the Ant noticed that Miss Cloud was sailing across the sky, pushed by Mr. Wind. When the Wind drew near, the little worker addressed him:

"Hello, Mr. Wind, strongest of them all. You blow Miss Cloud away, who hid the face of the Sun, who melted the Snow, that held my feet fast." And like an echo from the hills came the Wind's reply:

"Not so, little friend, though I blow up a gale, I cannot blow past the Wall. She stops me still." Determined to find out who really was the strongest in the world, Miss Ant hurried away to the Wall to inquire:

"Are you the strongest of them all? You can stop the Wind, that blows the Cloud, that hides the Sun, that melts the Snow, that held my feet so tightly." The Wall sighed and said:

"No, small Ant, it is not I, for Mr. Rat gnaws his way through me with little difficulty. He is stronger than I." Then peering down into the hole where the Rat family made its home, Miss Ant declared:

"Mr. Rat, you must be the one I seek, the strongest thing in the world, for you can gnaw a hole in the Wall, that stops the Wind, that blows the Cloud, that covers the Sun, that melts the Snow, that held me fast." But Mr. Rat was still panting from having run so fast to escape from the Cat and he denied being the strongest, saying:

"Go find Mr. Cat. He is far stronger than I." And so Miss Ant did and greeted him:

"Good morning, Mr. Cat, who can kill the Rat, who gnaws the Wall, who breaks the Wind, who pushes the Cloud, who hides the Sun, who melts the Snow, that held my feet. You must surely be the strongest thing on this earth." But the Cat purred back:

"There are many that are stronger than I, but the strongest of them all is the Jaguar, who can eat me up." Ant had to search a great deal before she found Mr. Jaguar in the jungle and, trembling, said:

"Mr. Jaguar, strongest in the world, you can eat the Cat, that kills the Rat, that gnaws a hole in the Wall, that stops the Wind, that sails the Cloud, that hides the Sun, that melts the Snow, that froze me to the ground. You, sir, are truly the Strong One." From his lookout high on a limb in the dense jungle, snarled the Jaguar:

"I wish I were, but I am not. Man makes a bow and arrow of wood and leather, shoots me, and I die." So once more our curious friend searched, finding Man in his village, and hailed him:

"Man, king of the world, at last I have found the strongest of them all. You can shoot the Jaguar, who can eat the Cat, who can kill the Rat, who eats through the Wall, who stops the Wind, who blows the Cloud, who covers the Sun, who melts the Snow, who held me so tightly."

"Nor am I the strongest," replied he to the Ant. "God made me." And bowing low, Miss Ant whispered to God:

"Sir, you are indeed the strongest of them all. You made Man, who shot the Jaguar, who ate the Cat, who killed the Rat, who gnawed the Wall, who stopped the Wind, who pushed the Cloud, who covered the Sun, who turned the Snow, who held me in its grip, to water." And God smiled down kindly and said:

"Yes, my persevering friend, I am the strongest of all things. And because you would not give up until you had discovered me, I hereby grant to you and all your kind, the strength and wisdom to withstand Man, Jaguar, Cat, Rat, Wall, Wind, Cloud, Sun, and Snow." And so it is today.

E.J.

## HERIBERTO GARCIA

### Mexico

The harshness of life in the slums and many rural sections of Mexico is reflected in much of the literature of that country. Heriberto García Medina, public relations officer for the University of Guadalajara, has aptly expressed this feeling in his collection of short stories *La Muerte de Sixto* (The Death of Sixto). He skillfully mixed descriptive beauty with stark reality in the present selection.

### The Lame One

The mountain ferns cried tiny crystalline tears that descended over the cheeks of the rocks to collect in the clear pool of the stream which, singing and happy, hurried along like a liquid snake to feed the thirsty mouth of the estuary.

Beneath the shade of the catalpa, the women were beating the soapy clothes with a stick. The cadence of their song was soothing.

> A lemon skin must be quite green
> to make a purple stain;
> love must be kept well hidden,
> or for long it won't remain.

"Did you hear that? The Lame One is coming, you can hear him in the bracken!"

The women ran, hurrying to throw themselves headlong into the black mouths of the huts.

Only the singing of the river was heard. The clothing scattered along the stream trembled with the wind's caress. With arrogant step, a muscular yellow figure, mottled with black, glided along the edge of the rivulet.

The jaguar reared up on its hind legs. A vigorous stroke of the paw shook the rope and down feel the fish, rich and smooth as manna.

"Wretched animal, now he's eaten all our catch!"

"Again he's taken us for fools. How well he knows when we have a full line. If only lightning would strike and split him in two!"

"I don't know why this miserable cat, begotten by the devil, doesn't get the mange."

The Lame One, an appropriate name for that feline animal with the soul of a pirate, who, after losing a hind paw in the teeth of a trap, sharpened his wits and developed his instincts to become the merciless scourge of the ranches around the estuary. He would kill for pleasure: one day, two or three cattle; another day he would scatter the mares, donkeys, or other domestic animals.

"The Lame One!"

The women fled to safety, snatching up their tearful, frightened little ones.

Evening came. The mosquitos descended, stabbing the shoulders and bare legs of the rustic fishermen with their lancets.

His voice shattered the languid mirror of the afternoon and its echo, chained to the wind, ran along the beach, modulated by the crests of the waves.

"Look, this time let's trap him!"

They strung the catch of fish quicker than was usual.

"Now the old women are working hard."

"Say, have they finished already?"

"The cat came back and knocked down all the fish. He only ate a handful. What he couldn't eat, he shredded with tooth and claw, and the few fish that remained were left in the sand to rot."

The heron preened its white plumage and hid its bill beneath its wing, lulled by the chorus of plump yellow toads who played in concert, concealed under the lilies.

The blue fireflies lit their lamps, speckling the black mantle of night with flowerlets. Meanwhile the men gathered around the bonfire, talking excitedly.

"You, Palanca, and Pedro will watch the whirlpool from up in the fig tree; my Gabriel and I will take the mouth of the estuary, because the path that he takes is there; the rest of you beat the underbrush to drive out the jaguar. I sent Carpacho to warn them at Tule's and they will be waiting for The Lame One to emerge from the marsh grass. Then at dawn we'll meet at Chamuco's house."

On the opposite side of the arroyo, a pair of glass-like eyes watched the bonfire and followed with fascination the dancing sparks caught up by the wind. The rhythmic shouting of the men was heard from the distance, taunting the jaguar and daring him to come out of his place of refuge.

Down by the river, the women were beating the barrels with their hands, now emptied of the fish caught the days before. Between the houses walks a little boy, crying and babbling, wiping his tear-drowned eyes with the backs of his chubby hands.

Just then, along the pathway, the tiger comes limping, looking for his victim. The boy stops at the bend of the path, watching with innocent eyes the curved, menacing body of the feline.

"Mama, here's the animal that Papa is looking for—Mama, here is The Lame One! I'll hit him with the stick and kill him."

The claws flashed, dizzily describing an ellipse of death, and the child fell, his little face destroyed, still clutching in his bruised hand the slender stick with which he innocently believed he would end the life of the big cat.

R.C. & F.D.

## JUAN GUZMAN

### Chile

While every nation produces some great literary figures all through its history, occasionally one generation will outdo all others. Juan Guzmán Cruchaga is a part of such an epoch—one in which Pablo Neruda, Gabriela Mistral, Pedro Prado, Joaquín Bello, among many, delighted the world with their poetry and prose.

Mr. Guzmán wrote many volumes of poetry, short essays, and plays and, in addition, has translated hundreds of works from other languages. He is currently completing the translation of Keats to Spanish, a monumental task.

Of all his tremendously talented writing, the very simple poem, "Song," has far outshone everything else. It's his "lucky piece," he once told the editor, but it wasn't luck but depth of feeling, sincerely and quietly expressed, that makes it one of the world's masterpieces.

### Song

Spirit, tell me naught, belated,
because to your voice long blighted,
my heart's doorway's locked and grated.

One small lamp burned, with hope excited,
All through life your love invited,
alone, waited.

My lamp you'll find no longer lighted.

The fall wind now has penetrated
and chilled a love long unrequited,
the soul's precautions all ill-fated.

My lamp flamed once, trembling, affrighted,
its own sad death illuminated.

My lamp you'll find no longer lighted.

Spirit, tell me naught, belated,
because to your voice long blighted,
my heart's doorway's locked and grated.

E.J.

## SIMON BOLIVAR

### Venezuela

Many volumes have been written about Simón Bolívar, the Liberator, telling of his unshakeable faith in American liberty, of his life as a general of the forces that freed Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, and helped free Peru, Bolivia, and Chile. Many words, too, have been printed about his many years as President of Colombia. Naturally he made mistakes, as any man will, and these, too, have been put on paper.

Despite all the writing done about Bolívar, none is more eloquent than his own words, letters sent to his friends and comrades-in-arms against Spain. The very brief excerpts given here vividly show his dedication to his friends and to the task of making America free and self-governing.

### Letters from the Liberator

October 2, 1813
Governor and Captain General of Curaçao:

. . .

Our continent, separated from Spain by immense seas, with population greater and richer than she, has been subjected to three centuries of degrading and tyrannical domination. When we received notice in 1810 of the dissolution of the Spanish government because she was occupied by the French, we put ourselves to the task of defending ourselves against that same fate and of assuring that anarchy and confusion did not prevail.

Venezuela, at first, created a junta to conserve the rights of Ferdinand VII: it offered fraternal asylum to all Spanish who wanted to emigrate and allowed them important positions in the government.

. . .

The ferocious Spanish were vomited over the coasts of Colombia to convert this most beautiful part of nature into a vast and hateful empire of cruelty and rape. The symbol of their re-entry into the New World was death and desolation: they caused the total disappearance of the natives and, when there were no more of these, turned on their own sons inhabiting this usurped land.

Last year the entire territory of Venezuela capitulated, laying down its arms and renouncing its political pretensions. But at the same time that Monteverde swore the absolute compliance with the offered promises, scandalous and barbarous infractions took place: towns sacked, buildings burned, women violated, entire populations imprisoned. Only those few who managed to run away into the jungle and live in dangerous misery, have escaped direct punishment.

. . .

Nor has Venezuela been the only funereal theater of these horrible slaughters. Mexico, Buenos Aires, Peru, and unfortunate Quito are comparable to huge cemeteries where the homicidal axes of the Spanish government have separated lives from bodies.

. . .

May 27, 1815
Sir Richard Wellesley of London:

. . .

The philosophy of the century, English policy, the ambition of the French, and the stupidity of Spain reduced America to being an orphan. Many counselled independence, expecting the protection of the British nation because the cause was just. Spain overcame initial surprise (*at the independence movements*) because England allowed Spain's return while reconquering her own lost dominions. Universal balance and British interests demand the salvation of America.

. . .

October 9, 1816
His Excellency the President of Haiti:

. . .

Your Excellency has just received the honor of being elected to head your republic by free acclamation of its citizens, the only legitimate human power. You are destined to obscure the memory of Washington, overcoming almost insurpassable obstacles. The Hero of the North encountered only enemy soldiers to conquer. Your Excellency has to conquer everyone: enemies and friends, foreigners and nationals, the fathers of your nation and even your own brothers.

. . .

March 9, 1821
General Luis Azuola:

. . .

I plead with you to communicate this part of my letter to all my friends so that Congress . . . will not again name me President. Let it be well understood, I will never again be President and if they do name me, I will always be absent from the capital or ill.

. . .

July 25, 1821
General José de San Martín:

It is with immense satisfaction, great friend, that for the first time I can call you by this word that my heart has consecrated for a long time. 'Friend' I call you and this must be the only word between us for life, because friendship is the only relationship that corresponds to brothers-in-arms, in-duty, in-opinion.

. . .

August 23, 1821
Admiral Cochrane:

The greatest satisfaction that my heart will have in joining forces with the ancient Incas and the newborn republics of the southern hemisphere . . . is to have the opportunity to know you . . . one of the most illustrious defenders of liberty in the world.

. . .

We ask your cooperation in coming to the extremities of Colombia, the coast of Panamá, to carry our Colombian soldiers, recently triumphant in their republic, to the Southern Andes where we will join forces with our brothers-in-arms there in the liberation . . . of these lands.

. . .

October 22, 1823
Doctor G. Francia, Asunción:

Since my early youth I have had the pleasure of cultivating the friendship of M. Bonpland and Baron Humboldt, whose knowledge has done more good for America than all her conquerors.

I am sorry to find that my adored friend M. Bonpland has been arrested in Paraguay, for causes unknown to me. I suspect that false reports have been circulated about this great scientist. For two reasons I plead . . . for his liberty. First, I caused him to come to America; I invited him to bring his knowledge to Colombia. The war obliged him to disembark in Buenos Aires and travel overland through Paraguay. The second reason is that we need his knowledge in Colombia.

. . .

While I anxiously wait as a devoted disciple of my friend, I am capable of marching all the way to Paraguay, just to liberate the finest of men and celebrated travelers. E.J.

. . .

# RICARDO PALMA

## Peru

Ricardo Palma (1833-1919) is Peru's greatest literary figure and one of the most renowned in all Spanish America. This reputation is based directly upon his short stories, which he called "traditions." They are tales created from a unique and inimitable blend of history, customs, legends, folklore, satire and humor.

### Margarita's Nightgown

In all probability, some of my readers have heard old ladies of Lima say, when they want to emphasize the high price of some article, "Why, this is more expensive than the nightgown of Margarita Pareja!"

I would never have satisfied my curiosity concerning the identity of that Margarita whose gown has become a byword, had I not run across an article in the Madrid magazine *La América* written by don Ildefonso Antonio Bermejo, author of a remarkable book about Paraguay. Although he mentions the young lady and her nightgown merely in passing, he set me to unravelling the threads of the mystery, and I succeeded in bringing to light the story you are about to read.

In the year 1765 or thereabouts, Margarita Pareja was the most cherished daughter of don Raimundo Pareja, Knight of the Order of Santiago and Collector of Revenue for the port of Callao. She was one of those lovely ladies of Lima who are so beautiful they captivate the Devil himself, and cause him to make the Sign of the Cross and hurl stones madly. She had a pair of dark eyes that were like two torpedoes loaded with dynamite, which used to pierce and shatter the hearts of the swains of Lima.

At about this time there arrived from the Royal City of Madrid an arrogant young Spaniard named don Luis Alcázar. He had an uncle in Lima, a wealthy bachelor of ancient Aragonese ancestry, who was prouder than the sons of King Fruela*. Of course, until the time came to inherit his uncle's estate, our don Luis was poor as a churchmouse and lived in dire poverty. When I say that even his escapades were on credit, to be paid for when his fortunes improved, I think I've said quite enough.

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*An eighth-century king of Asturias, cradle of Spanish nobility and royalty.

At the procession of St. Rose of Lima, Alcázar met the lovely Margarita. The young lady caught his eye and torpedoed his heart. He paid her polite compliments, and though she didn't say yes or no, she indicated with little smiles and other weapons of the feminine arsenal that the young man was very much to her liking. The truth—is that they fell head over heels in love.

Since sweethearts forget the existence of arithmetic, don Luis thought that his present poverty would be no obstacle to success in love, so he went to Margarita's father and without beating about the bush, asked him for his daughter's hand. Don Raimundo did not take kindly to the request, and he courteously dismissed the suitor, telling him that Margarita was yet too young to have a husband, since in spite of her eighteen years she still played with dolls.

But this was not the real reason. His negative stemmed from the fact that don Raimundo did not take kindly to the idea of being the father-in-law of a penniless young man. He must have mentioned this confidentially to his friends: one of them went with the story to don Honorato, for such was the name of the Aragonese uncle. The latter, who was haughtier than The Cid, snorted with rage and said: "Well, of all things! Rebuff my nephew? Many men would be tickled just to get him into the family, for there is no finer young man in all Lima. What consummate insolence! How far does that petty little tax collector think he can go with me?"

Margarita, who was well ahead of her century (for she was as nervous as a girl of today), wailed, tore her hair, and went into a swoon; and if she didn't threaten to poison herself it was only because phosphorous matches had not yet been invented. Margarita kept growing paler and losing weight, and was visibly pining away. She talked of becoming a nun, and lost all control over herself. "I'll be the bride of Luis, or of God!" she would scream each time her nerves became upset—which happened once every hour.

The Knight of Santiago became alarmed, and called in physicians and healers. All of them declared that the girl was on the verge of consumption and that the only remedy that could save her was not sold in the drugstore. Either marry her to the man of her choice, or lay her out in her coffin with a palm leaf and a wreath — such was the medical ultimatum.

Don Raimundo—who was, after all, a father!—forgetting his cloak and cane, dashed madly to the home of don Honorato and said to him:

"I've come to obtain your consent to your nephew's marriage right away — tomorrow — to Margarita; otherwise we are going to lose the girl very soon."

"It's impossible," answered the uncle caustically. "My nephew is a penniless young man; what you should seek for your daughter is a man who is rolling in wealth."

The interview was stormy. The more don Raimundo begged, the more obstinate the Aragonese became. The father was just about to leave in despair when don Luis, taking a hand in the discussion, said:

"But uncle, it is not Christian for us to cause the death of someone who is not at fault."

"Are you perfectly willing?"

"With all my heart, dear uncle."

"Well then, young man, I consent in order to please you but with one condition, which is this: don Raimundo is to swear to me before the consecrated Host that he will not give his daughter a cent, nor leave her a nickel as an inheritance."

Here a new and more violent argument began.

"But, sir," don Raimundo argued, "my daughter has a dowry of twenty thousand dollars."

"We renounce the dowry. The girl will come to her husband's house with just what she is wearing now."

"Let me give her at least the furniture and her trousseau."

"Not one pin. If you don't agree, we'll drop the matter and the girl can die."

"Be reasonable, don Honorato. My daughter needs to bring at least a nightgown to replace the one she has on."

"All right; I'll make an exception of that garment so you won't accuse me of being stubborn. I consent to your giving Margarita her bridal nightgown, and that's all!"

The following day don Raimundo and don Honorato went early in the morning to the Church of San Francisco. They knelt to hear Mass, and according to their agreement, at the moment the priest raised the Host, Margarita's father said: "I swear not to give my daughter more than her bridal nightgown. May God condemn me if I fail to keep my oath."

And don Raimundo Pareja kept his oath *ad pedem litterae**: neither in life nor in death did he ever give his daughter another thing of the slightest value.

The Belgian lace that adorned the bride's nightgown cost two thousand seven hundred dollars, according to the statement of Bermejo, who apparently took this bit of information from the *Noticias Secretas* of Ulloa and don Jorge Juan.** Furthermore, the drawstring at the neck consisted of a little chain of diamonds valued at thirty thousand dollars.

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*"to the letter"

The newlyweds let the Aragonese uncle think that the gown was worth only a few dollars at most, for don Honorato was so pig-headed that had he learned the truth he would have forced his nephew to get a divorce.

Let us agree that the fame achieved by the bridal nightgown of Margarita Pareja was indeed deserved.

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**Jorge Juan and Antonio Ulloa were in Peru in the eighteenth century as members of a scientific expedition. They were instructed by the king to make a secret report to him on conditions in America. E.J.

# JOSE GONZALEZ

## Chile

Like many men who later became great literary figures, José González (José Santos González Vera) began his career as a newspaper reporter, working in many of the larger towns of Chile. His best-known writing is from this youthful period, when his country was changing from a conservative agrarian country to a bustling nation featuring mining and industry.

When he won Chile's National Literary Prize in 1950, he had published only a few books—and these were small volumes. One critic jibed that his "complete works" wouldn't fill a student's notebook. Even since that time he has not flooded the market but has chosen to write, as he told the editor recently, "what he felt like writing."

The story included here, typical of his style, is an excerpt from *Cuando Era Muchacho* (When I Was a Boy). The book is actually a partial autobiography and the events really happened.

### A Romantic Dance

The public events of the Eighteenth of September holiday began. Both boys and grown men participated in the sack races; each one jumped and fell in his own style. For lack of practice, almost no one arrived at the goal without falling over backward a few times.

The most important event, however, was the greased pole. It usually was four or five yards high and was always peeled to make it more slippery. The prize, of considerable value, was fastened on top, to be snatched off by the one who climbed the pole.

The nervous ones took the first tries. They climbed in fast spurts and slid down even more rapidly. These were followed by the careful ones, who ascended slowly, assuring each hand and foothold, then raising the rest of the body. By the time they were half way up, they were so impregnated with grease that they slipped down without feeling it.

Flylittle waited until the last. When no one else wanted to try the climb, the people looked for him.

"Do you dare?" asked the mayor.

Flylittle, with elastic steps, arrived at the pole and began to rise with rapid and regular movements, just as if he were climbing a tree. He took the clothing and money sack and came down with the agility of a monkey. He disappeared in the twinkling of an eye.

There were three Flylittle brothers. The older two always stayed outside the town, but close by. That's why the villagers gave them their curious nickname.

The younger Flylittle was tall, muscular, with tangled hair. He went barefoot. In the morning he delivered milk. From the time I saw him leave a piece of glass half pulverized with a kick of his heel, I followed him. He usually walked alone, busy with his workday tasks. He farmed a small plot of his family's farm. He was neither friendly nor smiled. Two or three times I tried to talk to him and make friends because I admired him. He made a strange face at me and went on his way without answering.

In the evening he passed at a gallop on an old horse, sitting backward, managing the reins without seeing them. At each gas street light, he stood up in the stirrups and lit it.

He wasn't funny by design. His useful and necessary actions were carried out with extravagant flourishes. Even though he possessed all the resources of a well-developed man, his most serious movements were executed as though he were a child.

Between my and his house measured two blocks. Equidistant between both, there was a mud hut, poorly constructed, in which lived a short, fat girl, but with enormous black eyes, anxious and humid, that could dissolve the reserve of any careless male. Flylittle came and went. If there were no one in sight, he stopped a short distance from the girl and began something like a dance. There were a few steps that way, a few this way, arms raised, then came whirls and contortions. The first time, during the initial minutes, I laughed; much later I realized—I didn't comprehend at first—that his movements had a secret meaning. After that there was nothing laughable about his dance and the grace that flowed from him as he did his work was purified in his dance. When he raised his arms or traced designs with his foot movements, he never looked at the girl—nor afterward either. At times his dance became so violent that he didn't even notice the hasty disappearance of the girl.

If as he neared the mud hut, he saw the girl with a boyfriend, he walked on straight as a ramrod; but when the girl was alone, acting as if he didn't notice her, he began his rhythmic coming and going, never the same, but always with a seriousness that came from inside him. Maybe it was his declaration of love. I really liked to watch him dance and to do so, hid myself among some trees. The conclusion was the best part for his violence ceased and he concluded grandly. For example, if his last steps were wide and stiff legged, thus he went on down the street. Other times he finished with short, slow steps and without changing rhythm, glided on toward home. This ending hurt me but it shouldn't for there was never a trace of sadness in his character.

After I was grown, I went to the theater in the capital. The dancer did, with style and exaggeration, what Flylittle accomplished in the dust, in front of the girl, because he wanted to, because he felt who knows what inner need, because he never spoke and so knew no other way to express himself.

E.J.

## DEMETRIO QUIROZ-MALCA

### Peru

While many of today's Andean poets cry out against injustice and oppression with strident voices, Quiroz-Malca stands almost alone as he pens soft and beautiful syllables. His protest poems are melancholic; his love verses are bucolic. Born in 1924, his published volumes include *Mármoles y Vuelo* (Marble and Flight) and *Tierra Partida* (Divided Land).

### Little Elegy for a Dove

The air, accomplice to man,
nurtured within its breast—
death.

Death came sweetly,
fluttering,
submissively found
in the leaves.

All beauty you were,
muted and bound,
intoxicated muteness of heights,
a dove.

Death came sweetly
on wings of dawn,
fallen from heaven,
soft as love.

There was no wound in the echo;
there was no pain in your eyes,
only a heart sadly bleeding
without protest into the leaves.

E.J.

## XAVIER MARQUES

### Brazil

Xavier Marques (1861-1942) is considered to be one of Brazil's best short story writers and his many publications attest to his popularity with Brazilians. His stories are generally on regional or psychological topics and are often as short as the one presented here.

### The Life of Man

"God created man," began the narrator, "and told him:"

"Go! You are lord of the earth; its superior animal. A tremendous amount of work and great surprises await you, but in spite of these, you will be triumphant if you do your part. Your happiness depends primarily on your kind heart. You will live thirty years."

Man heard and said nothing.

God created the burro and said to him:

"You will live as a slave to man, carrying him and the burdens he hangs across your ribs. You will be discreet and patient enough to endure, even though the loads are heavy, the privations required of you during the journeys. You will live fifty years."

The burro meditated on this and responded:

"Slavery, burdens, privations, and live fifty years. That's too much, Lord. Thirty is enough for me."

God created the dog and told him:

"You are to be man's companion and, always alert, you will guard his door serving with complete obedience although you receive no more than a bone to curb your hunger. You will suffer blows, but, humble and faithful, you must lick the hand that punishes you. You will live thirty years."

The dog thought and retorted:

"Keep vigil day and night, be flogged, suffer hunger, and live thirty years. Please, Lord, I want only ten."

God created the monkey and spoke:

"Go! Your job is to make man happy. Jumping from limb to limb or tied to a stump, you must try, imitating his gestures, mimicking him, grimacing, to dissolve his saddness and put him in a good humor. You will live fifty years."

The monkey blinked his eyes and responded:

"Lord, that's too much for such an ingrate—to live thirty years is enough for me."

Speaking up, then, man said:

"Twenty years that the burro didn't want, twenty that the dog rejected, twenty that the monkey refused—give them to me, Lord; my thirty years is too little for the king of the animals."

"Take them," agreed the Creator, "You will live ninety years, but under one condition: you in your lifetime, must comply not only with YOUR destiny, but also that of the burro, of the dog, and of the monkey."

And thus lives man.

Til thirty he's strong, courageous, tough, defies danger and obstacles. He fights resolutely, conquers, and dominates. He is man.

From thirty to fifty, he has his family, and works without repose, to nurture it. He raises his children, wears himself out to give them an education and guarantee them a future. Upon him fall the burdens of life. He is a burro.

From fifty to seventy, he is the guardian of the family. Dedicated and docile, his duty is to defend his family and he can no longer have his own wish. Everything goes against him; he is humiliated but must obey. He is a dog.

From seventy to ninety he is weak, bent, shaky, wrinkled, useless, ridiculous, vegetating to a mere tune of his former self. He makes everyone laugh at his gluttony, his decrepitude, and even at his grouchiness. He realizes that others don't take him seriously but he is resigned to it and enjoys being a clown for the grandchildren. He is a monkey.

E.J.

## RAFAEL VASQUEZ

### Dominican Republic

Revolution ripped through the little nation of the Dominican Republic through much of 1965 and 1966. Forces and supplies of the United States, Cuba, and the United Nations were employed, along with Dominican troops, in bringing peace and a return to democracy. While the horrors, losses, and triumphs will go down in our history books, little will be said about individual sacrifices of men, women, and children. Rafael Vásquez, a little-known poet of this portion of the island of Hispaniola, reminds us of these in this work published in the Santo Domingo newspaper *El Nacional de ¡Ahora!,* August 13, 1967.

### An Achievement

Again elections would be held.

Old Ramón was tired of uselessly treading this earth.

He was tired of clawing, of sweating, of waiting, of dreaming, of being hungry; of carrying back-breaking loads of produce to market and selling nothing; of being cheated, humiliated.

He was tired of restless adolescents who wanted (he did not understand it and it irked him) to change the world.

He longed for lost respect.

But, above all, he was tired of the war, of mutual accusations, of lurking furtively, of ambushes; of intrigues and changes of government.

He longed for tranquility, serenity. He hoped for peace. He loved peace. He needed peace.

That's why he made a firm decision: he would vote for those who would do away with discord. He would vote for peace, so he could live in peace.

On the day of the elections, Old Ramón voted for peace. He did so happily, hopefully.

The ramshackle southern town, where Old Ramón resided, trembled with the triumph of peace.

The next day it trembled with shots. Brooms of lead to clean out the unclean. Cowardly shots.

One of these (no one will ever know why, even more disquieting) liked Ramón and entered his heart without thinking twice.

Since then, Old Ramón has rested in peace.

And the most curious of all is that he is not remembered among the martyrs for democracy.

E.J.

## TRADITIONAL

### Venezuela

Dr. Johannes Wilbert was born in Germany and is now a citizen of the United States, but he spent many years working with the Warao (sometimes spelled Guarao) Indians of Venezuela. One of the many books he has written about these people is *Warao Oral Literature,* a compilation of the many stories told him while he lived with them in the jungles of southern Venezuela. Several of the stories have the rabbit as the central character, as in our Brer Rabbit tales, which came to us from Africa. One of those told to him is almost exactly like "The Tar Baby" story still told in the United States and Africa. It is presumed that they heard the story from escaped slaves. The story told here is very similar to one credited to the Guatemalan Indians and appears in *Tales of the Western World* by Ruth Suddeth and Constance Morenus.

### Rabbit Gets a Jaguar's Paw and a Crocodile's Tooth

Rabbit is always deceiving the jungle people. At first, Rabbit lived all alone in his house in the jungle. Rabbit thought about this and said to himself, "Now why should this be so? A rabbit is small, that's why he has brains."

So Rabbit went to God and said to him, "I have come to talk to you. Since I am so small, stretch me a little."

Then God replied, "You did well to come. I am pleased that you came but I will not stretch you. But I want a jaguar's paw and a crocodile's tooth. Bring me these two things. If you bring me them, well."

That rabbit hears God's word and says, "Fine. I will look for them." So he went along, thinking about how to get these two things. About that time he came to a river and as he went along, he saw a crocodile in the water and called to him, "Crocodile, I am going to tell you the word of the old ones. When you hear someone call and you feel the urge to climb out on the bank, don't go."

"Very well," said the crocodile, "I won't go; I'll wait until another day." And he didn't leave the water.

Rabbit went on home and had a good night's sleep, knowing that Crocodile's curiosity would make him leave the river soon. The next morning he went to the forest, cut himself a big club, and hid where he knew the crocodile would come out on the bank. Soon the crocodile appeared and when he had climbed out of the water, Rabbit hit him with the club, nearly killing him. But the crocodile was near the river and managed to escape back into the water.

Rabbit said to himself, "Now what shall I do?" And he decided to come again the next day and try again, so he said to the crocodile, "Crocodile, I thought you would come out of the river today?"

The crocodile answered, "I did go but as I went along the trail, a tree fell and nearly killed me, so I turned back."

Rabbit sympathized with the crocodile and cautioned him to be sure to go down the trail the following day. As if concerned with Crocodile's welfare, Rabbit asked, "Where did the tree hit you?"

"It wasn't a vulnerable place," answered Crocodile, "or I would have been killed."

"Where does it have to hit you to kill you?"

"If it had hit my hand, I would have been killed."

"Aha!" thought Rabbit, "he has just arranged his own death."

The next day Rabbit again lay in waiting for the crocodile and when Crocodile came near, he hit him on the hand, killing him. Then he opened his mouth just so and took out a tooth.

Then he put his mind to thinking about the other task. "How shall I manage this one?"

So Rabbit goes into the jungle, and seeing many lianas, began to plait them together. Just as he was finishing, Jaguar came down the trail.

"Rabbit, why are you plaiting vines?"

"That's not even worth questioning. Surely you know."

And Jaguar answered, "No, I don't know."

"I will tell you. A cyclone is coming and I don't want to be carried away by the wind."

"Is that so?" said the jaguar.

"I'm telling you the truth."

So Jaguar said, "Well, then, tie me up, too. Tie me up first."

"All right," said Rabbit, "I'll tie myself up last." And he began to tie Jaguar up with the lianas, tying him up very securely indeed. He then found a sharp piece of glass and cut off Jaguar's paw.

Running, then, to God with the crocodile's tooth and the jaguar's paw, he told him, "I have come, God." He gave him the two presents and reminded him, "Now stretch me."

But God said, "No, I will not stretch you, just your ears." And so saying, he took Rabbit's ear and pulled. Then he pulled the other ear. "I will not stretch your body, just your ears, and that's enough. If I stretched your body you would cause your companions much suffering."

And even though Rabbit still deceives the other animals a lot, he is so small that he cannot do them much harm.

And that's the story told by the old one of how it came to be.

J.W.

## JOAQUIM MACHADO DE ASSIS

### Brazil

Like most Brazilian poets, Mr. Machado de Assis was very concerned with man and his search for individuality. Man's follies interested him as much as his good points, as is pointed out in these excerpts from one of his best loved poems.

### The Blue Fly

She was not just a small blue fly,
    but winged of garnet and gold,
    daughter of China or Hindustan,
    born in the leaves of a red rose bold,
    one summer night, that's certain.

She zoomed and soared,
    and soared and zoomed;
    shone in the clear summer sun
    and in the light of the pale moon bloomed
    like a diamond ring of a great shogun.

A small boy espied her,
    stifled startled scream,
    collected himself and presumed to inquire:
    "Miss Fly, this brilliance that appears like a dream,
    Tell me, O Bright One, who gave you this fire?"

Then soaring upward,
    she started to sing:
    "I am all life and likewise the dove
    of all grace, the pattern of eternal spring,
    I'm also glory, and equally, love."

Between the wings of this insect rare,
    as it somersaulted in space,
    his eye glimpsed something, his blood set arace.
    It shone like the splendor of an imperial place —
    he saw a vision, he saw his own face.

It was himself; he was a king,
the king of old Cashmere.
Over his collar of royal blue
lay a string of opals, one sapphire dear,
adorning an image of the god Vishnu.

Wanting to see her,
know the source of his gain,
caught her up in his hand then he grinned
with contentment to think of his imperial reign
and homeward bound, he flew like the wind.

He dissected her til
her little heart failed,
broken and dull, nothing left but derision
succumbed she then and her beauty failed
and with it all the imperial vision.

Today as he wanders aimlessly,
bright garlands encircling his brow,
his face is simple and foolish his eye,
long ago fled his senses, he'll never know how
his empire vanished and so did the fly.

E.J.

## MIGUEL ANGEL ASTURIAS

### Guatemala

Guatemala and most of Latin America greeted with great satisfaction the announcement that Miguel Angel Asturias, his country's ambassador to France, would receive the 1967 Nobel Prize for Literature on December 10, 1967. This son of a poor branch of an ancient and illustrious family of both Guatemala (a distant cousin, Mrs. Stella Cheesman, is Guatemala's gracious consul in Houston) and Spain, is Latin America's second to receive this coveted honor — he follows Gabriela Mistral, Chilean poetess, who won in 1945.

Now 68 and politically acceptable by his country's government and people, Asturias was for many years a "thorn in the side"of both Guatemala and the United States. Leading the life of a bohemian, he was an almost constant embarrassment, not only because of his family problems and precarious financial state, but also because he wrote free-swinging attacks on dictatorships, government officials in general, religion, United Fruit Company, and the United States. Champion of Guatemala's poor people and Indians, he lambasted, in intricate musical prose and poetry, all those who intentionally or otherwise oppressed these segments of the population.

It should not be assumed, however, that he wrote purely to protest unjust social and political conditions, for much of his work labels him as a "writer's writer." His use of symbolism, phonemic repetition, and varied meter in prose as well as poetry, was often more important than conveying a message or carrying the reader through a classically-arranged structure of meaning. Much of this, of course, was used to set moods or merely describe vividly the scenes or personalities of his works. The following passage from his *Legend of the Big Hat,* shows the brilliance of his descriptive style:

> Clouds, sky, tamarind trees . . . Not a soul on the laziness of the path. Once in a while the fleet-winged passage of Sunday parakeets eating up the silence. The day sauntered forth from the nostrils of the oxen: white, hot, perfumed.

In "Cuculcán," he places the following speeches in the mouths of Yaí, a wild annis plant used as incense by the Mayans, and one of their sun gods, Cuculcán:

Cuculcán (turning in circles):
"And once more sunflower, turn sun to sun,
Turn, sunflower, flower of the sun."

. . .

Yaí (entwining herself in the arms of Culculcán):
"Believest thou not, o Cuculcán, that
there's a wish to speak, even til dawn?
Share with us your senses, from your
tresses fall the rain, share your five
heart beats among the cardinal corners
of the earth, yours are the lakes, yours
are my hands, the mistless lakes, my
hands sans breath to beguile."

There is no essential meaning to the passages, merely a tonal emphasis on the perpetual circling of the sun and the wraith-like movement of incense smoke.

But he leaves no doubt as to meaning when he tells of the tortures and bestialities of dictator Manuel Estrada Cabrera (1898-1920) in the prison sequence of the man condemned to die of thirst in his book *Mr. President*:

> "Water, lieutenant! Water, lieutenant! Water, for God's sake, please, water!" No tears, no saliva, nothing humid, nothing cool, the throat but thorny pains, wheeling in a world of lights and white spots, his voice continued to hammer: "Waaaaater, waaaater, please, God, waaaater. Water! Water! Water!" And Vásquez savored his vengeance and the cries of the Italian that left the air as thirsty as dried cane chaff. Shots cut breath short. They were executing. It must be three a.m.

His novel *Men of Corn* is more nearly poetry than prose as he vividly portrays his projected feelings that the Guatemalan Indian lives in utter despair. He later protested US intervention, both military and economic, in *Strong Wind, The Green Pope,* and *Weekend in Guatemala.*

His poetry, too, while flowing and tonal, generally echoes his bitter thoughts of life and society. In his "Christmas Eve in the Americas," the White King, while adoring the infant Jesus, philosophizes:

Gold putrifies
as it the leprosy
is of all the metals . . .

And the Indian King protests the hopelessness of protest:

> Myrrh I bring you,
> Master of day —
> the heartbroken
> tear of the redman,
> the transparent
> petrified tear
> of the desert
> of all human tears.

His latest novel, *Mulata*, is truly a psychedelic experience in words. The excellent English translation by Gregory Rabasso makes your head whirl through a fantasy world of excitement and flavor. E.J.

### Barefoot Meditations

It's not the first time,
spark of humanity with a load of wood,
that you've seen, springing from the soil,
a hope. Your hope.
Hope, for you, can only spring from the soil.

From among the brambles and stones
of the dark and silent towns,
from the paths bathed in sweat of sad peons,
words sprang forth to kiss you.
The word. Hope can be this: a word.

With your tiny seed-pupiled eye
you see all, but are never surprised
for in your hidden books there is proof
of the return of good.

What's your name?
You're called "Heart of Flower that Follows Woman
and the Sun," and when you fall into the cloud of sleep
they call you "Hair of Rattan." And I call you
boy, peon, worker, stable hand, Indian.

Silence becomes astronomy
around your flesh sustained
by the internal invisibility of your bones.

And all will remain invisible skeletons
when you are humus, neighbor to metals,
to the flowers, to the spring fires in the ovens
that produce the transparent glass of your climate.
You have to climb to see the sky,
resolved, without fear of losing your mind.

Resolved. At times without knowing why it's resolved.
The support of roots flung to the winds, roots
irremediably and always roots,
tragic rays, roots of the storm, the points
of a somber scratch, without nails, never more like your progenitors
than now when you have to grasp that which supports you.
Not to defend the vegetative grace of your childhood,
of the cane flute tepid with the thread of live sound.
Not to defend the lips before the question that opens them.
Not to defend the blood in the cold skin that warms the wound.
Accept on your knees, just like an animal, only
the terrible eternity of the inheritance of being Indian
that sneezes moaning stars,
stars of wood, from the nose of the marimbas,
while the world sleeps intact under its nocturnal shell.

Misery of water and fire
and the spirals sure of smoke
close to the mothers sad from smelling nothing
around them, for nothing smelled
til the son, now grown to man,
left his grateful example to the sky
who between mountains, with the clouds, shows
the right path to follow.

Corals, thorns, tigers of oranges and shadows.
Alive in the afternoon between the leaves,
now the color of mold, between the leaves.

Let me speak before he blends melodies,
the son of the goat and the flute,
who at the junction of rivers finds the evening
between flocks of foam and lambs.
Play the flute
for the blue mist that rushing water carries above
and for the doubtful honor of the crawl of your animate geology.

All has been torn asunder. Your tenuous villages
exchanged for frontiers of violence.
What have you done so they don't cut off your feet
when cutting up countries in so much geography?

America is the sole of your foot,
with the great heel of the Aquilles of the North,
the narrow instep of Central America
and the fan of gigantic fingers in the South.
And thus you are through a thousand centuries,
waiting for them to return your cities:
that of the green and fragrant humus,
that of the day with the color of the sun blinded by gold,
that of the shining nine, hanging in the lights,
that of the whistle with claws, sweet sharpened feather,
that of the dog and the simple sea of pearls,
that which governed the drops of rain
and that of your hope, volcano of a green day.

Your hope you have now in your hands,
facing the truth, hands now yours, not of the master;
from these radiate the ten fingers of man's destiny.
Climb and demand, you're a tongue of flame.
Your conquest is sure in the definite future.
A drop of blood is made, a drop of life,
there your shoulders will carry the universe,
and over the universe your hope.

E.J.

## The Mirror of Lida Sal

The rivers are diminishing in size at the end of winter. The tinkling, gushing of waters is substituted by the dry silence, the silence of thirst, the silence of droughts, the silence of sheets of water immobilized between islands of sand, the silence of the trees which the scorching heat and wind of the hot summer have caused the leaves to sweat, the silence of the country where the laborers sleep naked and dreamless. Not even flies. Suffocating heat. A piercing sun and an earth like a kiln. The skinny cattle chase away the heat with their tails, hunting the shade of the avocado groves. Throughout the dry and scarce grass, thirsty rabbits, deaf snakes in search of water, and birds that can barely fly.

To say nothing, of course, of using up the eyes in looking at so much table-flat land. To the four sides of distance sight goes clear to the horizon. Only by looking sharply can one make out small groups of trees, fields of upturned earth and roads that lead from these, formed by so much coming and going from the same point, toward rude farm houses with humanity content with fire, with women, with children, with corrals — where life pecks away at the contentment of time, like an insatiable hen.

On one of those desperate hot days when one can barely breathe, Petronila Angelis, known to some as Petrangelis, wife of Felipe Alvizures, mother of a boy and months pregnant, returned home. Petronila

Angela pretends not to do anything so that her husband will not reprimand her for working in her state, but even so she manages to keep the house in order, everything in the right place: clean bedclothes on the beds, cleanliness in the rooms, patios, and halls, eyes in the kitchen, hands on her sewing and in the oven, and feet everywhere: in the henhouse, in the room in which corn or cacao is milled, in the storage room, in the corral, in the garden, in the ironing room, in the pantry, and everywhere.

Her husband bawls her out when he sees her working; he wishes she would spend her time sitting or lying down, which is bad, for then the children come out lazy. Her husband, Felipe Alvizures, is a capacious man on the inside, which makes him slow in his movements, and on the outside he is always enfolded in capacious clothing. He knows a little arithmetic, as he knows how to add ears of corn, and very little reading, because it's not necessary to know how to read, as many who never read know. Besides, she said that about being capacious on the inside because he took a long time to get his words together. It seemed as if he were going to bring them, one from one point and another from an even more distant point. Outside and inside of himself Felipe had ample room to move slowly, to think carefully and fully. And when his hour comes, God willing, Petrángela used to say, if death doesn't corral him, it will not be able to take him.

The heat of the sun was distributed throughout the house. A hungry sun that knows it's lunch time. But beneath the mud-shingled roofs it is more or less cool. Contrary to his custom, Felipito, the eldest son, arrived before his father, jumped, on horseback, the rail fence which only had two rails up, the highest and most dangerous, and amidst the fright of the chickens, the barking of the dogs, and the panicked swooping of pigeons, after going and coming at the speed of lightning, he sat on his horse amidst the sparks caused by the shock of the horseshoes on the stones of the patio and laughed.

"What a disgrace you are, Felipito . . . . I knew it was you!"

His mother didn't like these shows. The bright-eyed horse foaming at the mouth and Felipito now on the ground hugging his mother and making her feel better.

A little later his father arrived mounted on a black stallion named "Samaritan" because he was so gentle. He dismounted, patiently, to remove the gate rails which Felipito had jumped, he put them back and entered silently, only the clopping of "Samaritan's" shoes as he crossed the gravel toward the hitching rail.

They ate lunch quietly, looking at each other as if they were not. Felipe looked at his wife, she looked at her son, and the son at his parents who were devouring tortillas, tearing the meat of a chicken leg into pieces with their sharp teeth, drinking great draughts of water to wash down the mass of a delicious sweet potato.

"The Lord will know how to thank you, father."

The lunch ended, as always, with few words in the silence of everyone and Petrángela's consulting of her husband's face and the movements of his hands so as to know when he had finished a course so she could tell the maid to bring the next.

Felipito, after thanking his father, went over to his mother with his arms crossed on his chest, his head low, and repeated:

"The Lord will know how to thank you, mother."

And it all ended with Felipe in the hammock, his wife in the rocking chair and Felipito astride a bench. Each one deep in his thoughts. Felipe smoked. Felipito didn't have the nerve to smoke in front of his father and he followed the smoke with his eyes, and Petrángela rocked herself with one of her small feet.

Lida Sal, a mulatto girl giddier than a top, went on without paying attention to what she was doing, but to the gabbing of the blind man, Benito Jojón and a certain Faluterio, in charge of the festival of Our Lady of Carmen. The blind man and Faluterio had finished eating and were about to go. This helped Lida Sal to hear them. The dishwashers were almost even with the street door of the restaurant.

"The *Perfectantes*," said the blind man, grimacing as if to force out the wrinkles of his face, bothersome spider webs, "are magicians and, if it's going to be as you say, you'll find plenty of top candidates for the men are all pretty surly now. Yes, friend Faluterio, there are few weddings and a lot of baptisms, which is not good. Many single men with children, many single men with children."

"What is it you want? And I formulate the question in this way, like the wide open mouth of a jar, so you'll speak plainly on this point. That way I can afterward talk it over with the members of the Society of the Holy Virgin. The fiesta is almost upon us and there are no women to take charge of making the costumes of the *Perfectantes*, so we'll have to do as last year, without magicians."

"It doesn't cost anything to talk, Faluterio, doing something is more laborious. If they do me the charity of taking care of the *Perfectantes'* costumes, maybe we can find candidates. There are many women of marriageable age, Faluterio, many women at that age when they should get a husband."

"It's difficult, Benito, it's difficult. Beliefs of before. With what the people know today, who's going to believe in such a stupid, stupid thing. For my part and the part of everyone on the committee of the fiesta for the patron saint, I believe there would be no harm in putting you, for you need it since being blind you can't work, in charge of the *Perfectantes'* costumes."

"Yes, yes, I'll take steps to arrange for passing them out and in that way the things of the past won't come to an end."

"I'm going; I leave you; and consider the offer a firm one."

"I take you at your word, Faluterio, I take you at your word, and I'll try to figure out how God can help me."

The cold and soapy hand of Lida Sal abandoned the plate she was washing, poised it on the blind man's arm, on his coat sleeve that was so mended that it was just one big mend. Benito Jojón ceded to the affectionate touch and stopped, for he was on the way to his home — which was the whole plaza — and asked who detained him.

"It is I, Lida Sal, the girl that washes dishes here in the restaurant."

"Yes, daughter, what can I do for you?"

"That you give me 'new' advice."

"Oh, ho! then you're one of these that believe there is 'old' advice."

"And exactly for that reason I want the 'new.' Advice just for me, that you have never given anyone, that you've never even thought of before. New, so you'll understand, new."

"Let's see, let's see if I can."

"The case is, you already know . . . ."

"No, I don't know anything."

"That I am, how should I say, stuck on a man and he doesn't even know I exist."

"Is he single?"

"Yes, single, good looking, rich," sighed Lida Sal. "But how am I to get him to look at me, a dishwasher, since he's so important?"

"Don't work yourself up into a lather. I realize what you want, but since you've told me you're a dishwasher, how can you help pay for the cost of one of the *Perfectantes* costumes? They are expensive."

"Don't worry about that. I have a little, if the donation doesn't have to be too much. What I want to know is whether or not you promise to give me one of these magic costumes and if that one will be for him so he will wear it at the fiesta. He must wear the costume that I send, that's the main thing. The rest is up to magic."

"But daughter, besides not being able to see, I don't know where to find this gentleman you're interested in, so I'm doubly blind."

Lida Sal leaned over to whisper in the great wrinkled, hairy, dirty ears of the blind man:

"At the Alvizures ranch."

"Ah! Ah!"

"Felipito Alvizures."

"I see clearly; I see clearly. You want to marry well."

"No, God help me! Remember that you're blind and don't see clearly if you see monetary interest in my love!"

"Well, then, if it's not for money, it's because you desire him."

"Don't be an animal. My soul longs for him because if it were my body I would break out in sweat when I see him. I become as if I weren't myself and just sigh."

"That's good. How old are you?"

"I'll soon be nineteen, no, maybe it will be twenty."

"Are you going to the Alvizures'? That's what interests me."

"Yes, today. And what is this you've put on my finger? Is it a ring?"

"It's a gold ring and it's worth its weight."

"Good! Good!"

"And I give it to you as part payment on the donation for the *Perfectante* costume."

"You're a practical girl but I can't go to the Alvizures house without even knowing your name."

"Lida Sal."

"That's a pretty name but it's not Christian. I'm going where your heart sends me. We will give the magic a try. Since at this hour of the day Mr. Felipe's carts are loading or unloading wood at the market, I'll sit on one of them as I often do, and there they can't miss me as I wait for Felipito."

The blind man wanted to kiss Petronila Angela's hand but she jerked it away in time and a smack was heard in the air. She didn't like slobbery kisses and that's why she didn't care for dogs.

"The mouth was made for eating, for talking, for praying, Jojón, and not for going around eating people. Are you looking for the men? There they are in the hammocks. Give me your hand and I'll lead you to you won't fall. And what's happened that you came here so unexpectedly? Fortunately, you know that the carts are always at your disposition and that this is your house."

"Yes, may God repay you, my lady, and if I came without letting you know first, it's because time is passing fast and we'll have to be on our toes to properly prepare for the fiesta of the Holy Virgin."

"You're right, we are almost at the eve of the great day — and it seems to have come so soon, doesn't it? It doesn't seem to me that a year has passed. Can you imagine it?"

"And we're now making much better plans than those of last year. Imagine . . . . "

Mr. Felipe in one hammock, and Felipito in the other, rocked while the sun went down. The elder Felipe smoked a tobacco that smelled of figs and Felipito, out of respect, contented himself with watching the clouds of smoke form and break up in the warm air.

Petrángela, bringing the blind man by the hand, came to where they were, and when drawing near, announced the visitor.

"It's not a visit," corrected the blind man, "it's a bother."

"Friends are never a bother," advanced Mr. Felipe as he withdrew one of his short legs from the hammock so as to be seated.

"Did the carts bring you, Jojón?" asked Felipito.

"That's it, son, that's it. I had a way to come but I don't know how I'll return."

"Don't worry about it," answered Felipito. "I'll saddle a horse and take you."

"And if not, you can stay with us."

"Ah, my lady, if it were possible, I'd stay, but I'm pledged to a task and you know how that goes."

Mr. Felipe, meanwhile, shook hands with the blind man, hands so mysterious, and conducted him to a chair that Felipito brought.

"I'm going to put a cigarette in your mouth," Mr. Felipe told him.

"Don't even ask me, sir, because you don't ask permission to give pleasure."

And when he had inhaled deeply, Jojón continued:

"I said that mine wasn't a visit but a bother. Yes, pure bother. I come as ambassador to see if Felipito would like to be the chief of the *Perfectarios* this year."

"That's for him to decide," said Mr. Felipe Alvizures, making signs to Petrángela to come nearer and when she was near, put his arm part-way around the swollen waist that one arm couldn't encircle, so they were together, listening attentively to the talk of the blind man.

"This is some sort of scheme," reacted Felipito, letting fly a bit of saliva that shown on the floor. Every time he was nervous he spit that way.

"Don't think this is a joke," added Jojón, "there's time to think it over and decide carefully, as long as you don't take too long. The festival is almost here and remember, boy, you have to try on the costume so it will fit well and the braid of the Prince of the *Perfectantes* has to be sewn onto the sleeves."

"I don't believe there's much to think about," decided Petrángela. "Felipito is consecrated to Our Lady of Carmen and what better opportunity is there to show your reverence, than participate in her principal fiesta."

"That's true," articulated Felipe the son.

"Well, then," added the father, looking for words, "there's not much reason to think or talk about it," as usual not finding the words. "See, Benito, that you didn't waste your trip? And if, as you said, you're going to take him back on the horse, in town you can see which costume fits you best in case it has to be taken up anywhere."

"For the moment we can check only the braid," said Jojón, "I'll have to bring the costume for you to try on later because they haven't given it to me yet."

"Whatever," accepted Felipito, "and so as not to lose time, I'll go find a tame burro before it gets dark."

"Wait, Mr. Precise," his mother stopped him, "let's fix Jojón a good cup of chocolate."

"Yes, yes, mother, that's fine, but while he's drinking his chocolate, I'll find the burro and saddle him. It's getting late." And as he headed for the corrals, "It's late and getting dark — even though for the blind it's the same, day or night," Felipito said to himself.

The restaurant was calm and silent. Few people tonight. All the movement was at midday. So there was plenty of space for the blind man, clinging tightly to the arm of Felipito Alvizures, to enter and find a seat at one of the tables — and for two eyes to fix their black pupils on him, full of the light of hope.

"May I get you something?" neared Lalo Sol to ask, brushing with a napkin the old wood of the table, worn with the years and hard use.

"A couple of beers," answered Felipito, "and if there are rolls with meat in them, give us two."

The mulatta lost, for moments, the security of the floor, the only sure thing she had under her feet. She was blushing and hid it badly.

"And you, sir," Alvizures questioned the blind man, "where do you spend the night? Because I have to be leaving you."

"Here. Right here in the restaurant they sometimes give me a bed. Isn't that right, Lida Sal?"

"Yes, yes," was all she could say, and it was even more difficult for her lips to form the figure of the value of the beer and rolls.

Her hand seemed a hole, but whole, in which she felt her heart, she squeezed the warm coins paid by Alvizures, warm from his pocket, from contact with his person. Unable to resist their warmth, she raised them to her lips and kissed them, caressing them with her face, and then dropped them into her blouse.

Through the sightless dark, this darkness of nights that begin and end black, color of slate, trotted the horse of Felipe Alvizures into the distance, followed by the clatter of the burro on which the blind man had come.

And how difficult it is to break into talk midst so many silent things.

"Serene, Unseeing One," and this play on words came from her heart in its fiesta.

"And what must I do?"

"Daughter, you must sleep with this costume enough nights so that you leave it impregnated with your magic; in sleep one becomes magic. When Felipito wears the costume in the fiesta, he will feel the enchantment, will search you out, and will be unable to live without you."

Lida Sal wanted to climb the air. She was out of her head. She clutched the back of a chair with one hand and with the other one on the table, supported herself, while a choked-back sob rose to her lips.

"Are you crying?"

"No! No! . . . Yes! Yes!"

"Are you crying or not crying?"

"Yes, with happiness."

"But are you that happy?"

Serene, Unseeing, serene!

There was no costume more splendid than that of the *Perfectante*. Swiss Guard pants, archangel breastplate, bull fighter's jacket. Boots, braid, gold flecks, gold button loops and cords, solid and iridescent colors, spangles, beads, pieces of crystal with the sparkle of precious stones. The *Perfectantes* gleamed like suns among the masquerading figures that accompanied Our Lady of Carmen in the procession that wound through all the streets, rich and poor — no one was so humble that the Great Lady would fail to pass by his house.

Mr. Felipe shook his head from one side to the other. Thinking it over carefully, he didn't much like to see his son dressed up in all that flashy showoffishness but to have opposed it would have offended Petrángela's religious feelings, even stronger during her pregnancy. He hid his dislike with a joke that his consort felt was in bad taste.

"So stuck was I on your mother when we married, Felipito, that the people gossiped that she had slept with my *Perfectante* costume seven nights in a row — that was some twenty-seven, thirty years ago perhaps."

"Your father never was a *Perfectante*, son, don't believe him," she contradicted, apprehensively.

"Well, then gratis you got to sleep with the costume!" laughed Alvizures, man of few laughs, and not because he didn't like to laugh, to laugh is savory, but since the day he married he had always said, "Laughter should stay in the door of the church where one marries, where the Way of the Cross begins."

"This story that I put a spell on you to get you to marry me is purely of your invention. If you were a *Perfectante*, who knows for what other girl . . . ."

"Other? Not within twenty leagues around," and he laughed from the pure desire to laugh, inviting Felipito to laugh, "Laugh, son, laugh, you're still single. Laughter is the privilege of the single. When you marry, when someone sleeps in the *Perfectante* costume in which you will show off in the fiesta, goodbye laughter forever. We that are married don't laugh; we act as if we laugh but it's not the same . . . laughter is an attribute of the single . . . of those that are young and single . . . for those that are old and single don't laugh either, they just show their teeth."

"Your father mixes everything up," reacted Petrángela, "Laughter is for youth, married or single, and not for age, and now he's getting old, and what fault of ours is it if he's growing old?"

But Petrángela couldn't sleep that night. Flashing across her conscience were those nights that in truth she slept with the *Perfectante* costume that Mr. Felipe Alvizures wore in the fiesta thirty years ago. She had to contradict him in front of her son, for there are secrets that should never be revealed even to the children. Not secrets, intimacies, little intimacies. Dawn didn't come. She felt cold. She pushed her feet deeper into the warmth of the blanket. She closed her eyelids tightly. It was impossible to sleep again. Sleep wandered elsewhere than her eyes. She was afraid that at this same hour, on the eve of the fiesta of Our Lady of Carmen, someone was sleeping with Felipito's *Perfectante* costume in order to impregnate him with her magic sweat and through this art, seduce him.

"Oh, Our Lady of Heaven, Holiest Virgin!" she murmured through her teeth, "pardon my fears, my superstitions; I know they are stupidities . . . only beliefs, beliefs without base . . . but he's my son . . . my son!"

The best thing would be to find a way so he wouldn't be a *Perfectante*. But how if he had accepted and was to be the Prince of the *Perfectantes*. It would mean disorganizing the whole fiesta, and besides, it was she, in front of her husband, that had pushed Felipito to accept.

Dawn didn't come. The cocks didn't crow. Her mouth dry. Her hair spiderwebbed across her face from so much looking for sleep in her pillow.

"What woman, o my God, what woman is sleeping in the *Perfectante* costume that my Felipito will wear."

Lida Sal, more cheekbones than eyes during the day and at night more eyes than cheekbones, swept her pupils from one side to another of the room in which she slept, to assure herself that she was alone, that darkness was her only companion, that the door was securely fastened, the door and the counter opening to the service room. Her throat dry from anxiety, her eyes damp, her muscles trembling, she put herself into the *Perfectante* suit before lying down to sleep. But rather than sleep, it was a suspension of feeling that slowly paralyzed her body, suspension and fatigue that did not impede that in a low voice, half asleep, she talked to the cloth, confided to each of its colored threads, to the spangles, to the beads, to the gold, her sentiments of love.

But one night she didn't put it on. She left it wadded up under her pillow, sad because she had no mirror in which she could see all of herself wrapped into the costume, not because it mattered how it fit — short, long, too big, too small — but because it was part of the pre-magic to wear it and see it on her in a full length mirror. Little by little she pulled it from under the pillow — sleeves, legs, back, chest — to caress it with her cheeks, pose it before her thoughts, kiss it with tiny smacks.

Jojón came for his breakfast very early in the morning. Since conniving with her, he had eaten whatever his appetite desired, always behind the back of the boss who spent little time in the restaurant these days as she was busy with the preparations for taking care of the special clients and salesmen during the fiesta days.

"The disgrace of being poor," complained the mulatta, "I have no full length mirror in which to see myself."

"And that's urgent," answered the blind man, "because without it your magic might fail."

"What am I to do, the only way is to enter a rich house at midnight, like a thief, dressed like a *Perfectante*. I've given up hope. Since last night I've been unable to figure out what to do. *Advise* me."

"That's what I don't know. Magic has its consistencies."

"I don't understand what you mean."

"Yes, because magic consists of this and consists of dressing up as a *Perfectante* and seeing yourself in a full length mirror."

"And you being blind, how *do* you know about mirrors?"

"I wasn't born blind, child. I lost my sight when already grown, fault of a bad infection that first attacked my eyelids and then the inside of my eyes."

"Yes, in the big houses there are big mirrors . . . there where the Alvizures live. . . ."

"They say there is a beautiful one in the *Alvizures* house and they even say . . . No, it's not a joke . . . . But maybe I can give you one hope. Only for that reason do I bring it up, not as gossip. I make this exception so you can become her daughter-in-law. They tell that Petrángela, mother of Felipito, had no mirror in which to see herself while putting the spell on Felipe. The day she was married she wore the *Perfectante* costume under her bridalgown and when she took off the white gown, instead of being naked, was a *Perfectante*; just to complete the ritual, to complete the magic."

Lida Sal took the cup from which the blind man had just drunk coffee with milk and dusted away the bread crumbs from the table. The boss wasn't coming.

"I don't know where but you have to find a mirror big enough to see yourself dressed as a *Perfectante*," were his last words. This time he forgot to remind her that it was time to return the costume, that the fiesta was almost upon them, and that he had to take it to the *Alvizures'*.

Stars almost drowned in the light of the moon, dark verdant trees, corrals smelling of milk and serenity, stacks of hay curing in the fields, even yellower under the full moon. That afternoon had stayed late. It had crept away so slowly that finally it was just a reflection cutting across the already starred sky. And Lida Sal contemplated the line of blue, red, rose, green, violet of the afternoon, remembering that the time had come to return the costume.

"Tomorrow is the last day I can leave it with you," advised Jojón, "for if I don't take it then, we lose everything."

"Yes, yes, tomorrow I'll give it to you, today I will see myself in the mirror."

"In your dream mirror, child, because I don't see where. . . ."

The luminous line of the afternoon remained in Lida Sal's eyes, like a last refuge, the last refuge left to the sky.

"Cursed insect!" came the restaurant owner to pull the girl's hair, "Aren't you ashamed, with all the pans still dirty! For several days you've been running around like crazy and getting nothing done."

The mulatta silently allowed her to pull her hair and pinch her arms. A moment later, as if miraculously, the bawling out ceased. But that was worse because the insulting wordage was followed by prayers and indoctrination.

"The fiesta is almost here and the girl hasn't even asked for a change of clothes. From what I owe you, you should buy a dress, some shoes, some stockings. It's not funny appearing in church and the procession as a lowly nobody. It would make me ashamed to have them tell that I'm your boss, that I keep you hungry, feeding you on leftovers."

"Well, if you agree, tomorrow I'll go buy some things."

"Surely, girl. Pleasing seeks pleasing. I'm pleased with your work and it pleases me to buy what you lack. And even more because you're young and not ugly. Who can say but what among those that come to sell cattle at the fiesta, you may make a good match."

Lida Sal heard her as if not hearing her. She washed the pots, thinking, re-thinking what she had imagined as the sun set this afternoon. The most difficult part was washing the skillets and pots. What unhappiness. She had to scour them with pumice stone to cut the greasy scum in the bottom and later battle with the greasy soot on the outside.

The moon's splendor made it impossible to remember that it was night. It seemed that the day had just cooled, but continued the same.

"It's not far," she said, giving voice to her thought, "and it's a big stock pond, almost a small lake."

She didn't remain long in her room. She would have to be back by dawn and hand over the *Perfectante* costume to the blind man so he could take it to the Alvizures' house. But first she had to see herself in a large mirror—the magic has its consistencies.

At first the open countryside made her apprehensive but later her eyes became familiar with the trees, rocks, and shadows. She saw so clearly that it seemed she was walking in the light of a submerged day. No one saw her in this rare costume and a good thing or they would have struck off running as if seeing a diabolical vision. She was afraid, afraid of being a fiery vision, a flaming torch of spangles, a rivelet of beads, of droplets of water that would integrate into one big precious stone with human form — upon arriving at the lake dressed in the suit in which Felipito Alvizures would shine at the fiesta.

From the eyelashes of a cliff smelling of earth slides, among torn-out roots and tumbled rocks, she contemplated the wide mirror — green, blue, and deep — among the gauze of low clouds, moon rays, and dreams of darkness. She believed she were someone else. Was it she? Was this Lida Sal? Was the road, that night, under that moon, with that costume of fire and dew?

On each side her shoulders were caressed by the eyelashes of the pines, and the sleepy perfume of somnambulent flowers wet her hair and face with the tiny pools of kisses.

"Let me through!" she said as she advanced through the woods of fragrant, demented ginger.

"Open a path! Open a path!" she repeated as she left behind the rocks and giant stones rolled down from the sky as if they were "aeroliths" or from the mouth of a volcano in a not remote cataclysm if from the earth.

"Let me pass! Let me pass!" to the rapids.

"Make way for the passage of beauty," to the rills and arroyos that, like she, went to see themselves in the great mirror.

"Ah! You are drunk up," she told them, "but not me; it's only going to see me, see me dressed as *Perfectante,* so I can fully complete the magic ritual."

There was no wind. Moon and water. Lida Sal climbed a tree that slept crying, but at the top, descended in horror, for maybe it would be a bad omen to see yourself in the mirror together with a tree that cried in its sleep.

She went from one side of the beach to the other, looking for a site from which to see herself completely. She couldn't manage a complete image. Entire body. Only if she climbed one of the tall rocks at the other edge.

If the blind man saw me . . . but what stupidity, how could a blind man see her. . . . Yes, she'd said a stupid thing; the one who had to see her was she, see herself from feet to head.

Now she was there over a basaltic rock, contemplating herself in the water.

What better mirror could there be?

She slid one foot toward one edge so as to better show off the costume she wore, spangles, beads, luminous stones, braid flecks and cords of gold, and later the other foot so as to see herself better and then she couldn't stop, and her body splashed against her image, a clash that left neither her image nor her body.

But she returned to the surface. She tried to save herself . . . the hands . . . the bubbles . . . the drowning . . . she became the mulatta that fought the unattainable . . . the shore . . . now the shore became the unattainable.

Two immense cries of sorrow . . . .

The last to close were the great sorrows in her eyes that saw, recede more and more into the distance, the shore of this tiny lake called, from that time on, the Mirror of Lida Sal.

When it rains in the moonlight, her cadaver floats. The rocks have seen it. The willows, weeping leaves and reflections have seen it. The deer, the rabbits have seen it. The moles have telegraphed the news with the palpitations of their little hearts of earth, before returning to darkness.

Silver nets of twinkling rain take up her image from the quicksilvered mirror and parade it in costume of *Perfectante* on the surface of the water as luminous and absent dreams.

***Aguardiente:*** **a strong, crude alcohol made from sugar cane.**

***Perfectantes:*** **a very special honor guard for the Virgin, supposed to see that the people conduct themselves properly during the fiesta. B.J.**

## VICENTE MENDOZA

### Mexico

Men, throughout the ages and in every part of the world, have set the stories of female betrayal to music (and women write of men's betrayals) but none have surpassed Mexico in this art. *"Ella"* (she) and *"Cucurucucu, Paloma"* (The Mourning Dove) are well known in Southwestern United States. Equally heart-rending but seldom heard here is *"La Valona del Preso,"* dramatic in both lyrics and music.

### The Prisoner's Lament

Ay! Hear the grating of cell keys!
Ay! My life with sorrow laden.
Ay! You find me fettered in a dungeon
because of faithless women.

Ay! What clanging of steel padlocks!
Ay! The steps have come and gone!
Ay! The marching of the soldiers
that will shoot me down at dawn.

O! Sweet Guadalupe Virgin,
grace me with your consolation;
grant, please, your blessing on
this felon
who bids goodbye,
who has to die
at five, the dawn.

I went with pleasure to my trial,
by manhood's right she had to suffer.
Condemned I am, there's no denial,
not for the murder of her,
yes, for having loved her.

That Sunday! What a moment!
That . . . that . . . woman, my loving spurned.
That Sunday! What a moment!
Still painful is that day of torment.
She left as for Mass and never returned.

I felt the world 'round me shrinking;
my heart then with bitterness filled.
I spent all my days and nights drinking
and tried to live on without thinking
but memories would not be stilled.

I came to myself and her I found
on a moonlit night and with not a sound,
took out my knife and with a bound,
cut off her head, it rolled on the ground
and I spit on her there, a sodden mound!

Ay! What clanging of steel padlocks!
Ay! The steps have come and gone!
Ay! The marching of the soldiers
that will shoot me down at dawn.

O! Sweet Guadalupe Virgin,
grace me with your consolation;
grant, please, your blessings on
this felon
who bids goodbye,
who has to die
at five, the dawn.

E. J.

## CARMEN LIRA

### Costa Rica

Costa Ricans, *ticos* they call themselves, are at one and the same time, both humble and proud. Their tiny Central American country is mountainous, poor, beautiful, rainy, rough. The nation has no army but law and order are respected. They have few elegant buildings but even the poor houses are clean and decorated with flowers. They have no world famous geniuses but everyone learns to read and write. They have only one "hero of violence," Juan Santamaría, who almost single handed turned back the US adventurer, William Walker, who ruled Nicaragua and planned to take over Costa Rica.

Their independent, realistic, democratic, God-fearing character is reflected in most Costa Rican literature, but none has expressed it better than Carmen Lira, pseudonym of María Isabel Carvajal, a teacher born in 1888 and deceased in 1949.

### Uvieta

Well, sir, once upon a time there was an old man who lived all alone in his house and who was named Uvieta. One day he suddenly decided to take off for parts unknown; saying and doing being the same for him, he went to the bakery and bought some bread with the only dime left dancing around in his pocket. At that time they gave three loaves for ten cents and the bread wasn't the chunk of leather it is today, that makes your jaws ache, but was lightly toasted outside and spongy inside.

He returned home and began to pack his things when — bang, bang — a knock at the door. He went to see who it was and found an old man, quaking and calamitous. The old fellow asked for alms and Uvieta gave him one of his loaves of bread.

He returned to pack the other two in his saddlebags when — bang, bang — again at the door. He opened it and there stood a little old lady, bent and with a face that showed long fasting. She, too, asked for help and he gave her a loaf of bread.

He checked over the house, and throwing the saddlebags across his shoulder, was ready to leave when again a knock sounded at the door.

This time it was a child with a face that was pitiful, dirty, his clothes tattered, skinny as a worm. There was nothing to do but give him the last loaf. What the heck! God takes care of everybody.

And without provisions he took off to see the world.

After traveling a long time, he came to a creek. Uvieta was as hungry as a bear but since he had nothing to eat, decided to fool his gut by filling it with water. At that moment the old beggar man appeared and said to him:

"Uvieta, Our Lord sent me to ask what you'd like. Ask for whatever you want. He's very grateful because you helped us. Look here Uvieta, the three that asked for alms were the Three Divine Persons: Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. I'm Joseph. You can imagine how they feel about you up there! All you can hear is 'Uvieta' here, 'Uvieta' there, everywhere."

Uvieta thought about what to request and finally said:

"Well, then, go tell Him to send me a sack, not just any old sack, but one in which anything I want will appear."

Saint Joseph was off to Heaven in a flash and in a moment was back with the sack.

Uvieta threw it across his shoulders. At that moment a woman passed with a basket full of custard pies on her head.

Uvieta said, "Custard pies, come to my sack."

And the pies appeared in Uvieta's sack and he sat down by the fence, finished them off, and looked for even more.

He started down the road again and before he had gone very far, met the little old beggar woman who said:

"Uvieta, Our Lord, my son, sent me to offer you whatever you ask."

Uvieta wasn't ambitious, "No, Little Mary, tell Him 'no thanks,' the sack is enough. Full stomach, happy heart. What else could I want?"

The Virgin began to plead, "Jesus, Uvieta, don't be so thankless! Don't turn me down. You'd ask a favor from Joseph but I can go to the dogs!"

Then Uvieta saw that it was unkind to turn Our Lady down, so he said: "OK, since my name is Uvieta ('owner of a vineyard,' from *uvas,* grapes), let Him plant a grape vine by my house and whoever climbs it, can't get down without my say-so."

The Virgin told him it was no sooner said than done and took her leave.

He continued on down the road until he came to another creek. He was thirsty and went to it. In the current he saw some fat fishes swimming. Being still hungry, he said:

"Let these fishes come to my sack, all nicely cooked in a rich sauce." And sure enough, the sack was filled with the fish, cooked in a sauce so rich you'd almost burst eating them.

He had just gotten on the road again when out came another little old man who said: "Uvieta, Our Lord sent me to ask if you need anything. He didn't come in person because it isn't a good idea. You see. After all, He is who He is! What a furor it would raise if He had to reappear here!"

"I don't want anything," responded Uvieta.

"Don't be so rash! Ask! In Glory they're with you, one and all. Don't keep something to yourself that you really want, for you deserve the best."

"Wow! What a saint this guy is that's carrying the ball!" thought Uvieta and turned to go but the other followed, pleading, so to get rid of the guy who was plastered to him, he said:

"Holy Mary! So much for those little loaves of bread! OK, tell Our Lord that what I want is to die at the hour when I'm good and ready."

He didn't continue his travels for he wanted to see if the grape vine were at his house, and returned.

He walked and until finally arriving — no lie, there was a grape vine to end all grape vines — and Uvieta was so pleased with himself that he almost burst his britches.

Well, days passed and Uvieta grew so greedy with his grapes that he wouldn't let anyone have any. And they couldn't steal any because they knew that whoever climbed up couldn't get back down without Uvieta's permission.

One day Our Lord thought about this and said:

"This guy Uvieta is really conceited about his grape vine. After such a fine beginning, a disaster." And Papa God called Death and told him:

"Go rope, hog tie, and bring me that Christian that doesn't remember there's a God in Heaven for thinking about his precious grape vine."

And Death, who does just as Daddy God orders, took off in a stampede. Arriving at Uvieta's house, he knocked on the door. Out he came, and finding Death, as though he'd found an old friend, said:

"Goodbye, work! What are you doing here?"

"Our Lord sent me for you."

"Yeah? Well, He and I agreed He wouldn't send for me until I was ready to go."

"I don't know a thing about that," answered Death. "When the Admiral speaks, the sailor jumps."

"Hum!" mused Uvieta, "This is one guy he's not carrying home to Our Lord."

"OK, friend," he said, "come on in and have a seat while I get my belongings together."

Death entered and Uvieta seated him so he'd be looking at the grape vine that was loaded with ripe grapes.

"What a beauty, Uvieta."

And gathering up his things as though preparing to leave, Uvieta urged him:

"Why not climb up, friend, and eat all you can hold."

The other took him at his word and scrambled up. Seeing him there, Uvieta began to laugh as though to split his sides. "That's just what the doctor ordered," he shouted, "now let's see you get down until I want you down!"

Death wanted to get down but couldn't and there he was for years and nobody died. There wasn't room for everybody on earth and the old folks, tired and useless, were everywhere. And Our Lord was with Uvieta like oil with water: messages went back and forth: today the giant, Saint Christopher; the next day Saint Louis the King; the next Saint Michael the Archangel.

"Hey, Uvieta. The Good Lord says for you to let Death get down or you're going to be sorry."

And the next day, "Uvieta, the Lord says if you value your life, let Death down."

And the next day, "Uvieta, the Savior says you're going to laugh out of the other side of your mouth if you don't do what He says."

But it all went in one ear and out the other, saying, "Sure, I'm no toad; I know what will happen if I let him down."

Finally Papa God sent word that if he'd let him down, He'd promise that Death wouldn't carry him off. Then Uvieta let Death down, who took off like a shot to Our Lord.

But Our Lord wasn't at all happy, so He called for the devil and sent him after Uvieta.

The devil arrived and knocked at the door, "Uvieta, are you there?"

From inside he asked, "Who is it?"

And the other, jokingly answered, "Old Inez with her feet on backward."

But that voice sounded ugly to Uvieta, as if it came from a barrel full of exploding firecrackers. He peeked through the keyhole and seeing the devil, kept out of sight.

"Oh, no, not on your life! It's the devil! I'll bet they've sent him to get me for what I did to Death. Now what'll I do?"

But at that moment he got an idea and going to the trunk, took out the sack. Returning to the door, he snatched it open and before the devil could even blink, said:

"Into the sack, devil." And before Lucifer realized what was going on, he was in Uvieta's sack.

"Now, Uncle Satan," shouted Uvieta, "let's see who gets whom!"

The devil begged long and hard but Uvieta replied, "What do you think I am?" And grabbing up a club, beat him without mercy, until the devil was pure dust.

Hearing the cries, Our Lord had to send down to find out what was going on. When He found out, He promised Uvieta that nothing would happen to him if he'd quit beating the devil. God had to get tweezers to put the devil back together again and when completed, he took off at break-neck speed for hell.

The Lord was fed up with Uvieta and again called for Death, "Now this time, don't fall for his tricks and don't get gabby. Grab him while he's sleeping and bring him up here. And if you don't get him this time, you're going to have to wrestle with me!"

Death was ashamed, and following Our Master's orders, slipped in at night while Uvieta was sound asleep, grabbed him by the hair of the head and took off for the other world, leaving him at the gates of Glory so they could do whatever they wanted with him.

When Saint Peter opened the gates the next morning, he found Uvieta mad as a setting hen and a stirred up hornet's nest. Saint Peter asked his name and hearing "Uvieta," made the Sign of the Cross. Had he not been in such a sacred place, he would have told him, "Get out of here, you good-for-nothing!" But he was in the sacred place and besides, being a very polite saint, said, "Get away from me! You already caused Our Lord enough upsets."

"So, where do I go?"

"Where? To hell, but it's already here with you around!"

Uvieta took the road to hell. The devil was on the porch. Seeing Uvieta and fleeing for inside, was one and the same thing. Besides, he barred the door and called for the other devils to bring everything they could find and pile them against the door, for outside was Uvieta, the man who had beaten him to a pulp.

And Uvieta was there for three days, knocking on the door and greeting them as in the olden days.

"Purest Holy Mother! Open."

And when they didn't open up, he returned. As he neared the heavenly gates, Saint Peter said, "What's going on, Uvieta, that you're still piddling around?"

"So, what do you want me to do? I was there for three days and they didn't open."

"What did you say?"

"I? Well, as usual, I said, 'Purest Holy Mary! Purest Holy Mary!'"

The Virgin was in the patio, feeding the chickens that had been a gift to her, with golden beaks and feet, and that laid golden eggs, when she heard the voice, "Purest Holy Mary!" She went to the gate, thinking someone was calling her, and seeing Uvieta, was overjoyed.

"What surprises God has for us in this life, Uvieta. Come in!"

Saint Peter didn't dare contradict Our Holy Mother and Uvieta marched into Glory. E. J.

## EARL JONES

### Venezuela

This land of oil has so many heroes that one, a Negro slave to Simón Bolívar, is nearly lost in so much glory. But humble men have not forgotten Felipe. His tomb in the Independence Monument, at Carabobo where he met death, and the plaque honoring him in the National Cemetery, are revered sites for many Venezuelans.

### Ode to a Dark Hero

A coward say you me, my lord?
He whispered softly through the foam
That bloodied cheek and chest and valiant steed.

A coward, sire? And hand unstaunched
The gaping wounds that dealt
By ball and sword had death to him decreed.

A coward, no, my lord and liege,
I sprang to fore as want of yore
To be THE FIRST, the charge to lead.

They shot me through, o master, sir,
I'm riding dead but could not go
Without one glimpse of him I loved,
One farewell touch to plead.

Then down he plunged, a soddened heap
Of him that through the mem'ried years
Of battle-ridden liberation wars
Had served the devil, man, and god,
Through grief contained and conquered fears.

He bore him up, no stone to bruise
In Andes snows, in jungle strife;
He brought him food, his thrist he quenched;
He warmed him, cheered him, clothed his flesh;
He nurture was, companion, too;
Though two, they shared one life.

Ex-slave this black-skinned gift
To Grand Colombia's hero came
Hell-charged in battles, bitter fought,
And rightly earned, THE FIRST, his name.

The Royal troops this night-black savage feared.
With shouts, invectives foul he sped
Their souls to hell and bodies cleft
With cold steel slashing trunk from head.

But battles end; the trumpet blown;
And back he trod, the demon flown,
Now in its place a touch, a tone
That soothed the pain, the mental moan
Of him who ordered, death had sown.

Then uniforms he smooths and shines
By firelight toils til tasks are done
While warming, watching
Guards his own — his master, father, son.

So you guard, too; his vigil keep,
This revered saint of fire and heart.
Pray, sons of Venezuela's plain
That he might strength impart.

For God so loved this swarthy one
He greater love and valor gave
And diademed his sacrifice
With hallowed, hero's grave.

## CARLOS SAMAYOA

### Guatemala

Legends have been the center of many Guatemalan stories, legends that sometimes are founded in reality and sometimes not. Earthquakes, floods, and volcanos have repeatedly destroyed records, so it's difficult to tell whether there were real events that lead to this one or not. But it doesn't matter, for Carlos Samayoa Chinchilla tells this story of Brother Pedro, patron saint of Guatemala, in such a way that it's lesson is always worthwhile.

### The Emerald Lizard

The rumor of whirlpools, waters of pensive river that slid along under the sky's blue porcelain; gardens and silence; women with dark eyes and skin the color of brown sugar; the circlings of doves, towers; naked mountains, fruit and vegetable markets; old and devout environments, cloisters full of sighs, penumbras, heartaches, bells, young noblemen mounted on shod steeds; chatter, tiled roofs, coats-of-arms, volcanos, corn fields, fiestas, processions . . . .

In the shade of the ancient evergreen trees, Brother Pedro of Saint Joseph of Bethancourt rested this beautiful morning. It had rained copiously the night before and now the clouds, obeying the wind-shepherd, rolled along leaving open breaks through which the sun sent its rays over the noble and faithful city of the Caballeros de Santiago de Guatemala.

The saint — thick beard, deep and shining eyes, gnarled walking stick held in shaggy hands — thought of all the charitable works yet to be done and his spirit was lost in the flights of his imagination. The inn for travelers and convalescents, after having suffered many moves and deprivations now, thanks be to God, had its own building next to Christ School. A gentleman of the city had offered to donate several hundred clay tiles; the nuns helped him everyday by sending baskets of newly baked bread; the lepers of El Tortuguero appeared improved since using the medicine prepared from the bark of a certain tree in Turrialba (Costa Rica) that had been brought to Brother Rodrigo de Tovar. On the other hand, everyday there were more sick in the hospital and so the space, medicines, and food were insufficient.

Over the white vein of the road appeared an Indian. Steadying himself with a staff made of quince wood, he came through the shade slowly and solemnly.

"Good morning, Father."

"May Our Lord make you good and holy, brother. What troubles your heart?"

The Indian's soul was anguished and he fell on his knees before the saint.

"Father Pedro, my wife is very sick; she is dying and I have no money to buy medicine. The children, my sons, are also dying, but of hunger, pure hunger. By the Cross of Our Savior I swear that is the truth from Juan Manuel Jurakán!" And making a cross of his two rough hands, he brought it to his lips and kissed it devotedly.

His soul in anguish before such obvious pain, Brother Pedro sought in the pockets of his habit but found nothing, for the pockets of the habit of a true saint are always empty. Nothing! Not even a crust of bread big enough to feed a lark!

Pedro raised his eyes to the heavens, demanding help, and behind those eyes flew the golden bird of his heart, the bird of his fervent desire to do good, that goes in search of Him who can do anything. Is it possible, Lord, that in the kingdom of Guatemala, here on this splendid morning, that nothing can be found to help the plight of this poor Indian?

Then came the sound of rustling in the dry leaves of the little blue creek. Out came a green and black lizard to take his usual sun bath. The saint, smiling tenderly and gravely at the same time, took him up and held him to his hands. The little animal closed its eyes, staying completely immobile, and the just man then said affably:

"Juan Manuel Jurakán, man of little hope, take this lizard to the jewelry store of don Juan de Oñate, at the entrance to the market. Don Juan will give you something for it and with that you can relieve your suffering. Never again doubt the mercy of the Holy Spirit."

The Indian opened his startled eyes wider: the lizard had suddenly changed into a shining jewel and there in those earthy hands, gleamed like a red coal of gold. His admiration was so great that he dared not move for fear of ruining the miracle. And around them a circle of angels on invisible wings sang:

"Juan Manuel Jurakán, man of little hope, take this lizard and carry it to the jewelry store of don Juan de Oñate, at the entrance of the market. Don Juan will give you something for it, something to ease your troubles. Never again doubt the mercy of the Holy Spirit."

Several years passed, years packed with experience for the Indian Juan Manuel Jurakán, and his hair, black before, is now gray. His sons grew and became merchants of blankets, shawls, and all kinds of cotton and wool cloth. He had purchased several acres of land; the corn and wheat had enriched him; he had many cows and each year sold a herd of mules at the San Andrés Itzapa sale near Chimaltenango. Through backbreaking work he had saved enough coins, one by one, to redeem the jewel, and one morning, bright and sunny, he went in search of Brother Pedro.

He imagined him smiling and opulent, his body covered with multicolored robes, in the middle of a flock of lambs. His surprise was great when he encountered the priest in his same old, tattered habit, meditating in the same rocky site.

"Good morning, Father Pedro."

"May God grant your desires. What do you need, brother?"

Whirlwinds of intoxicated light made the tender air of the morning vibrate. The soul of the holy man was like a garden in flower, full of grace from the greatness of his virtues.

"Father, don't you know me? I'm the Indian Juan Manuel Jurakán and I've come to return the jewel you gave me ten years ago."

Pedro searched all his thoughts, looking for the name in the tame but deep canyon of his memory.

"Juan Manuel Jurakán? The jewel I gave you ten years ago? No, I don't remember."

"Father, dear Father, I see that you are very old and in great need. My Indian heart is grateful. Here is the lizard that you gave me to relieve my suffering. You sell it, too, and rest a little."

Parsimoniously, Juan Manuel untied the knots of his silk handkerchief and placed before the eyes of the old man, a lizard of gold and emeralds. Pedro of Saint Joseph Bethancourt smiled sadly. He was almost blind and his suffering had greatly weakened him. Seeking always how to help others, he had never had time to help himself. Without saying a word, he tenderly took the fabulous lizard from the Indian's hands and after contemplating it for several seconds, delicately placed it on the pile of rocks. At the touch of the rock, the little animal returned to life and disappeared.

The bells in the noble and faithful city of Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala awoke and, redoubling their efforts, sent the message out into the clear air. The indifferent city was excited! Within its walls a miracle had been produced! An authentic and great miracle! The people gathered and in joyous procession led by the bishops and priests, sang Hallelujah! Hallelujah! through the streets.

Meanwhile, Brother Pedro, forgotten by everyone, struggled up the slopes of a creek bank with a sick Indian on his back, imploring mercy on his poor soul; and the tinkling of the little bell that always accompanied him fell like drops of gold, punctuating the immensity of the soul of this holy man.

E. J.

## ELENA PONIATOWSKA

### Mexico

Country people everywhere have a feeling for others that appears to be lost in the great cities. The simple rural folk of Mexico are concerned with their neighbors, with all those they meet. And they are grateful for friendship, for an opportunity to share their joys and sorrows with their fellowmen. This little story typifies that greatness of heart of these people.

### The Gift

I was tired as I walked. My boots were covered with mud and dragged as if they were made of iron. The pack dug into my back, heavy. I had walked a long way, so far that I moved mechanically, like an animal defending itself. A farmer in his cart passed and stopped, telling me to climb up. It was difficult but I was finally able to seat myself beside him. The cold seeped through me. My mouth was dry, cracked at the juncture of my lips; my saliva was like paste. The wheels sank into the earth, turning slowly. I thought I should make an effort to get in motion like the wheels and began to mumble some few words. Very few. He just barely answered and we continued with great patience, with the same patience of the horse that pulled us through the ruts, with the patience of the road, wet or dry, old and worn out. And we threaded words like seeds while the air grew thinner as we climbed — it seems one always must climb — and we talked, I don't know, of hunger, thirst, mountains, weather, without even looking at each other. And suddenly, despite the terseness of our smelly, dirty clothing, we drew together in spirit. And we said surprising things, simple things such as when one completes a long and arduous journey through a gray land, as when one comes to a clearing in a forest. I was a stranger and uttered just a few words taken from my pack, but they were like his and we did nothing but exchange a few of mine for a few of his. He became enthusiastic, looked into my eyes and the forest broke the silence. "You know," he said, "soon the springs will begin to flow again. Living in the mountains isn't bad. It's coming down to the valley, the town, and then comes drink and women. The difficult part, then, is to go back up the mountain." We said that soon it would warm up. That the plants were struggling to come up. That the harvest this year would be good. Our words were like rough clods, like dry boards, but we understood each other.

We came to the only town with an inn. When I climbed down from the cart, he began to search his pockets, empty them, turn them inside out, nervous, anxious, holding me with his eyes: "What shall I give you? What can it be? I want to give you something." He looked all around, hopefully, searched the sky, the fields. He poked again through his poor clothes, through his pants stiff with mud, through the much used coat molded to his body, to find some gift. He looked above with a glance that took in the whole universe. The world remained remote, far away, indifferent. And suddenly the wrinkles of his swarthy face, all the furrows etched from sun to sun, smiled at me. All the cock crows of the world awakened lights on his brow. He bashfully took a little piece of paper out of I don't know where, and seating himself again on his cart and supporting his calloused hand on his knee, told me:

"Now I know. I'll give you the gift of my name."

## JOSE HERNANDEZ

### Argentina

The wide pampas of Argentina stretch across the center of that country like a grassy sea, providing a home for the cattle industry, the beautiful horses, and the *gauchos,* cowboys as romantic as those of Texas. But like his brothers in Texas, not all of his life was romantic — quite the contrary — he worked hard in a lonely life. He has nearly disappeared now because fences, jeeps, airplanes, and other modern methods have made cattle raising a far different job.

José Hernández, lawyer and journalist, lived with the *gauchos* part of his life and was moved by their independent spirit, their hard work, and their unfortunate life. The epic poem we know as *Martín Fierro* was published in two separate volumes: *The Departure of Martín Fierro,* 1872, and *The Return of Martín Fierro,* 1879. Both were very popular and were reprinted many times, mostly in inexpensive paper bindings so the common people could buy them. [If you have the opportunity, visit the library of the University of Texas in Austin, which has a large collection of these early editions.]

José Hernández not only wrote the poem to tell the readers about the romance of the *gaucho,* but also to obtain help in bettering the conditions of those people. The *estancia* (ranch) owners and government officials abused the Argentine cowboy, sending him wherever they wanted him to go, breaking up families, paying him little, killing him when it suited their purposes. The people believed the story and forced the government to bring about many reforms, easing the life of the cowboy on the pampas.

Walter Owen, a Scot, lived nearly his whole life in Uruguay and Argentina, and loved these countries as if they were his own. Although he was a businessman, he spent a great deal of his time translating the literary works of southern South America so that non Spanish-speaking people could enjoy them.

His translation, too, has been very popular, and has been published many times all over the English-speaking world and, indeed, many of the translations to other languages have been made from Mr. Owen's, rather than the original Spanish.

## Martin Fierro

This cowboy worked on a ranch in Central Argentina, roping, branding, herding, breaking horses, and all the other thousands of jobs there are on a cattle ranch. He made little money but was able to maintain his wife and children in a humble way.

One day, however, the officers of the government took a lot of the cowboys by force, to fight in the war to the north. Their conditions were almost unbearable, and although they fought valiantly, many were killed and the few that were left, escaped.

The only way Fierro could save his life was to go into Indian territory. These Indians were fierce, cruel warriors, and only after keeping him tied up for a long time, did they allow him to hunt and fish as a free man. One day, however, a slave woman was being beaten unmercifully by one of the Indians of this tribe. He couldn't stand to see a woman beaten and killing the Indian, saved her life. Both of them had to leave the Indians, then, or be killed. They endured many hardships but finally made their way to the tribe of this Indian woman and were saved.

Martín Fierro decided to return to the pampas and look for his family, hoping that the government had forgotten that he had deserted after the battle. He searched for many years, but his family had been scattered, making it difficult to find them. He finally located two sons but these young men, now grown, blamed their father for deserting and for not returning to his family, causing the mother's death and great hardships on the other children.

Fierro spent the rest of his life wandering from place to place, making a living by doing odd jobs and singing, a wandering minstrel, just as he had done while searching for his family. He was very popular with the cowboys for his songs, accompanied by his guitar, told of the sad life of the *gaucho,* a life they all knew so well.

In those days, when two good singers met, they often engaged in a singing duel called a *payada.* One would improvise verses about any subject and the other had to carry the song on, even answering questions the other had asked in his last verse. This is still done in some parts of Latin America but it's not the same as in the old days, for he who lost the duel (when you couldn't answer a question in rhyme, you lost) was thoroughly disgraced and sometimes committed suicide.

One night Martín Fierro entered a bar and seating himself, saw one of the most famous minstrels of that area, a Negro, tuning up his guitar. They challenged each other, and the following verses are taken from their duel:

### FIERRO

As long as there's sound in the strumming strings
And my hand hasn't lost its cunning,
You won't find me slow to toe the scratch
And hold my own in a singing match,
And if I'm not first at the winning post
It won't be for want of running.

Let him open his ear who wants to hear,
And the gossipers take a vacation;
I'll ask you folks to pardon me
If I make any slips, for it's plain to see
That no one's perfectly free from faults
Who can't withstand temptation.

When I was young, sweet songs were sung —
The phrase has oft been used before —
But luck has many an impish whim,
Misfortune dogged me and turned me grim,
Ah, time long gone! since those times on,
I sing of my sorrows sore.

Tune up, tune up! All night we'll sing
To the lilt of the ringing gut;
The company's waiting; we're both in fine fettle,
Come sing with me and I'll test your mettle,
The strings we'll strum til the morning's come
And the candles burn to the butt.

And the singer bold that wants to hold
A singing match with me,
No matter how clever and smart he feels,
He needn't expect to see my heels;
We'll start right now and take turn and turn,
Til the blink of the dawn we see.

### NEGRO

There's many that are, on the Spanish guitar,
More clever and light and larky;
I'm only a player that's middlin' fair
But I'm sure plumb glad heav'n's heard my prayer
And a singer I've met that seems all set
To try out this humble darkie.

A warm-hearted race are the black-of-face,
Though they don't spread the news around;
There's nothing to beat how they stick together
And they stick the closer, the worse the weather,
They're like the macaw, for under its wing,
Its chickens are always found.

But since I was grown, I've been on my own,
For myself I've always fended;
I've always roamed like a bird as free,
And every tree is a home for me,
All the learning I've got, by a priest was taught,
Whose class I once attended.

I'll pull or let go, go fast or slow,
Swap knocks, if you're bent on knocking,
I guess I won't keep him waiting long,
Who challenges me to a round of song;
It's silly to ask if a man is lame,
You'll know if you watch him walking.

So fire away and sound my wits,
You won't find me slow or surly;
Ask what you like but please overlook,
If my answers don't sound just like a book,
In letters I don't know the J from the O,
They're both so curly-wurly.

**FIERRO**

Come on then man, don't jib or shy,
In view you're so mighty wise;
You've got the hook well down, I feel,
So answer me right off the reel,
While the beat you ring on the sounding string;
What song is the song of the skies?

**NEGRO**

They say God fashioned the black man first
When He planned man's shape and figure,
Yet there's some white folks that's so mighty proud
Though they ask him to sing to amuse the crowd,
They don't remember he's got a name
But only that he's a nigger.

And after this opening that fits quite well
With my present situation;
With my spare wits the best I'll do
In a word or two to answer you;
And I'll tell you what the song of the skies
Is in my estimation.

The heavens sing, and weep and sigh
Forever and evermore,
In the silent dawn of the dew they weep,
They sing when the winds o'er the pampas sweep,
Their tears gush out when the tempests spout,
And they chant in the thunder's roar.

**FIERRO**

Black and white God made, but He never said
Which one of the two was duller;
He gave them all the same cross to bear,
And equal woes, and the same despair,
But He also made light, and He made it white,
The better to show up color.

And seein' as how into the world
This gift you've brought along,
Don't sing too small, but don't sing too big,
And don't get ruffled and lose your wig;
And quick on the spot, just tell me what
Is the song that's the Ocean's song.

**NEGRO**

When the mighty winds o'er the ocean blow,
The waters all round the earth
Rise up and sing with a dreadful roar,
Til the whole world trembles from shore to shore,
Like a beast it howls in earth's rocky bowels
As if raging to come to birth.

**FIERRO**

The best of your brains you'll have to rack
This time — I'll bet my hat.
Make chums right now with some holy saint,
You'll win if you are, and you'll lose if you ain't.
As well as the Sea and the Earth and Sky,
The Night has her song — what's that?

## NEGRO

A wary man said to a bold man once:
'Don't gallop, there's holes around.'
I'll answer you simply: Night murmurs low,
Her song on the winds that come and go,
And that echoes bear from none knows where,
That seem but the ghosts of sound.

They're the whisperings of the secret things
That the shadows of night enclose,
The phantom voices that haunt the ear,
When a cry goes up in the midnight clear,
Like the muffled tone of an endless moan
From a source that no man knows.

When the sun rises high in the sky,
The shadows seek their lairs;
But when night comes down on the world then, hark!
How the voices stir in the silent dark,
The voice of the souls of the dead and gone
That ask us for our prayers.

## FIERRO

I'm telling you, man, once again,
I've taken your style and measure,
Some good horse sense out of life you've squeezed
To have run up against you I'm mighty pleased;
To hark to your stuff is more than enough
To make this match a pleasure.

It's my duty too, to say to you,
That your brag you've justified.
I'll tell the truth and shame the devil;
There's not many singers that touch your level,
And though you're pitch dark on the outer bark,
You're chock-full of light inside.

And I won't have it said I was so ill-bred
As to here abuse your patience,
You've answered me, and if now you want
To know some things of what you're ignorant,
Just feel yourself free to puzzle me
Without any reservations.

**NEGRO**

Good tongue; don't trip or halt or slip,
Your cunning don't start forgetting,
Though the stake of the game is a singer's fame,
It's by missing the mark one learns to aim;
If you go to sea by your own sweet will,
It's silly to fear a wetting.

I'll ask you now what I'd like to know
Since to answer me is your pleasure;
I'll give you best in our singing match,
If you answer this batch with all despatch:
Explain to me please what Number is,
And Time, and Weight, and Measure.

**FIERRO**

The sun is one, and the world is one,
One moon in the sky we see;
So it's plain and broad, that Almighty God
Never made any quantity.
The One of all ones is a single whole,
And One was the first amount;
Number only began to be made by man
As soon as he learned to count.

**NEGRO**

Here goes another to test your wits—
On this riddle employ your leisure:
The being that first made One from Nought
No doubt on his files the answer's got,
But as for me, I never did see
Just why He created Measure.

**FIERRO**

Hark well to me — if you don't agree,
Let my ignorance be excuse —
Every single measure man measures with,
Man made for his private use.
It's easy to see God didn't need
Any measure to help his plan,
He had nothing to measure, once he'd fixed
The length of life of Man.

**NEGRO**

If you answer me this one I'll confess
In this art you fair excel me;
A singer of parts has got to know
Lots of things like these, if he'd make a show;
There's another thing here I want made clear:
The meaning of Weight please tell me.

**FIERRO**

God keeps in the stores of His secret lore
This mystery profound;
He simply ordained that every weight
Should fall til it hit the ground.
And since life's a bundle of bad and good,
I'll answer you this again:
The use of Weight is to estimate
The sins of the sons of men.

Hold on now, boy, and clear your wits,
Get set for a nasty jar;
Don't let your tongue at this question fail,
And give me your answer right on the nail:
What's got to be done on a cattle run
In the months that are spelt with 'r'?

**NEGRO**

It's only right that in every race
The quicker should lift the prize;
It's bound to happen to every one,
A losing race some day to run,
When a middling singer makes a match,
With another of outside size.

The trees of the forest creak and groan
When they're struck by the stormy blast;
Is it any wonder that here I grieve
And a heavy sigh from my breast I heave;
When my singer's renown to the wind is blown,
And my day is overcast?

I swear to heaven from this day on
I'll give up the singing art;
And if some day my breast takes fire
With the olden flame and the old desire,
It won't be my aim to sing for fame,
But to lighten my heavy heart.

As long as I live I'll not forget
The taste of this bitter cup;
Though time may soften my sorrowings
Yet never again I'll spread my wings;
If you're not meant to fly in the great blue sky,
What good is it looking up?

What's going to be is a mystery
That time in its bosom guards;
To say what the next act's going to be,
Ask a fortune teller and not to me,
The future hides what fate decides
But we'll all know afterwards.

**FIERRO**

And now that we know just how we stand,
For more talk I'm not inclined;
The chance you're wanting to come your way
You can have if you like this very day,
It seems to me it's time to begin
A match of a different kind.

No more than you can I tell you true
What's now about to be;
But I'm not getting off the trail I choose:
Til I get to the end, I'll win or lose.
There's never a man since the world began
That escapes his destiny.

But every man has got to pull
In the yoke he's harnessed to;
It's a long time now since I picked a fight,
And in quarrelling I don't delight,
But I'm not afraid of a threatening shade
Or a wandering minstrel blue.

I thought that only the bones were left,
But I've still got to do the tail;
By what I can see, it seems to me
From this racket I simply can't shake free,
And I'll tell you all, this is what I call
To rivet a well-driven nail.

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*Programa de Educación Interamericana* sincerely appreciates those authors, publishers, and recording companies that permitted the use of their materials in this volume, and to those who contributed in myriad ways in the collection, interpretation, and translation of the literature included herein. Special thanks go to the libraries of Texas A&M University and the University of Texas, and the Consul General of Guatemala, Mrs. Stella Cheesman, for their assistance and the use of their collections.

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